THE PURE CHURCH

IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CONNECTICUT

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1967

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy,
in the Faculty of Political Science,
Columbia University

ABSTRACT

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The Puritans who settled New England attempted to realize an ideal with long roots in the Christian past. They tried to create a pure church system, in which only regenerate persons would be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, the Puritans expected to retain many of the features of an established church. The combination of a pure and an established church was basically unstable and began to break down even before the end of the seventeenth century.

In Connecticut, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the pure church remained an ideal, but the actual practice of admissions to Communion had become much less restrictive. Solomon Stoddard finally attacked the ideal itself in his attempt to create in New England a "national" church of which every Christian, regenerate or not, would be a member. Stoddard's out-right rejection of the pure church ideal was not so widely accepted in Connecticut as has been believed; Stoddardism encouraged a tendency toward less restrictive admission in practice, a tendency which even the Mathers, who believed in the pure church theory,

encouraged.

The Great Awakening began a reaction in favor of the pure church. The great evangelists, Whitefield, Edwards, Bellamy, Tennent and Davenport were mainly concerned with shattering the security of saints and sinners. They were far more concerned with purifying the New England churches than they were at enlarging the churches. Edwards finally attempted to reinstitute the pure church practice at Northampton in 1748. Although he failed and was dismissed from his pulpit, Edwards became the intellectual leader of the pure church. In Connecticut his most influential disciple was Joseph Bellamy, one of the founders of the "New Divinity."

The collapse of the Revival led to the organization of schismatical Strict Congregational churches. Despite persecution these churches persevered in their efforts to put the pure church ideal into practice. They gained adherents; they worked out an inter-church union; they coped successfully with the problems caused by their more enthusiastic members. Finally, by 1777, the Strict Congregationalists won complete victory in their struggle against the parish rate.

Within the Standing Order the abrupt ending of the Awakening added bitterness to a controversy over itinerant preaching. Those who opposed itinerancy were in control of the civil and ecclesiastical machinery of Connecticut during

the period of the Great Awakening, but with the advent of a new generation of ministers, the anti-itinerants lost power to those who held pure church ideals, and who were finally beginning to put those ideals into practice. By the close of the eighteenth century the churches of the Standing Order were nearly unanimous in demanding proof of regeneration before admitting persons to the Lord's Supper. Since this was so, many of the Strict Congregational churches merged with the regular churches.

The triumph of the pure church helped bring about the disestablishment of the Congregational churches in 1818 by creating a predisposition among the regular clergy toward a voluntary church of real saints, over which the unregenerate world would have no control. The pure church victory also revived the Puritan concept of the errand into the wilderness, from which errand we Americans may not yet have returned.

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INTRODUCTION

Puritanism today needs no apologists. From scorn and boredom, the attitude of American historians toward our New England forefathers has become one of warm interest and respect. Much of the renaissance in Puritan studies was the work of one man--the late Perry Miller, who has again for our generation placed beyond dispute the importance of the Puritan mind.

Miller's aim was as ambitious as his genius was profound. He attempted to decipher the verbal expression of a unique culture in order to penetrate the "interior" of ideas. While no one doubts the value of Miller's work, there have been recently criticisms of various of his conclusions, and an even more fundamental criticism of his method. Miller often discussed ideas as if they existed independently of a concrete historical environment. Historians have been urged to a study of local sources in order to supply the proper setting in which Puritan ideas grew, flourished or died. Several excellent recent works have demonstrated the value of such an approach. Darrett Rutman, for example, in his Winthrop's Boston offers a considerable challenge to the major thesis of Miller's Orthodoxy in Massachusetts.

The present work is the result of a careful study of the church records of eighteenth century Connecticut in order to determine a point in Puritan ecclesiology. New

England was dedicated very early in its settlement to the realization of a "pure church." In order to be admitted to the Lord's Supper one had to relate to the church members the details of a "conversion experience." The Puritans hoped that their congregational churches would hold none but "true saints." On the other hand, the New England Puritans meant their churches to perform many of the functions of the national church from which they had never separated before coming to America. There was, therefore, within New England Congregationalism from the very beginning a fundamental contradiction, which immediately caused unforeseen problems. One such problem was the ever growing difference between the total population and the number of communicants. Although nearly everyone in Puritan New England was taxed for the ministers' salary, and was required to attend church services--excluding the sacraments--it is abundantly clear from recent studies, and from my own investigation, that only a small part of the adult population were communicants throughout the eighteenth century. The following work, therefore, in dealing so exclusively with the church records, is treating of an institution to which only a minority of the population gave its fullest allegiance.

It is this paradoxical attempt to maintain a national church which would yet retain the quality of a pure church, and the resolution of that paradox, that forms the thesis of

this paper. Like any other creation from the hand of man, this work has necessary limits. It is restricted to a study of Congregationalism in Connecticut. The Puritans of the "Land of Steady Habits" were the last major group in American history to attempt to preserve the ecclesiology of John Cotton and Thomas Hooker. The work is further restricted to the eighteenth century. The appearance of Solomon Stoddard's first published attack on the pure church in 1700 marked a convenient starting point, while the Second Great Awakening, which introduced new topics of interest and which changed the whole background of New England church history, was a logical terminal point. This work, then, concentrates on the period from Stoddard to the eve of the Second Awakening, a time of "deadness" in religion so far as contemporary ministers were concerned, but a time also when Puritanism was shaken to its roots by the First Great Awakening, a brief but determinative experience.

There is finally an even more fundamental limitation involved in this treatment of the pure church. I have been concerned almost entirely with explaining what happened rather than why it happened. For this, there is some justification. It is no doubt accepted by all historians that we must know what people did before we attempt to explain why they did so. There has been much written in an off-hand way about the decline of the pure church in the eighteenth century, and this has usually been taken as a manifestation

of the waning of Puritan piety. I have established, I hope, that the pure church ideals of the New England fathers were remarkably intact at the close of the eighteenth century. It was a conclusion that surprised me, and which should have some impact upon our understanding of Puritanism in general. As to why Connecticut Congregationalists retained a pure church, or why that ideal became so strong after the Great Awakening, these questions have been only touched here and there in the following chapters. They are questions which deserve extensive treatment and the present work, in one sense, is merely a preface to any such investigation. While I hope myself to undertake that labor, I believe that anyone who does so will find the present work indispensable.

Chapter I

THE PURE CHURCH IDEAL

On April 1, 1636, in the meetinghouse at Dorchester, one man after another rose up and related to the audience, a select body of "saints" from the neighboring churches, the details of that mystic experience in which God had given him assurances that he had been predestined to Life and rescued from the results of Original Sin.[1] These men were professing, each for himself, that they were regenerate. They were professing their "conversion" to a panel of "real Saints",[2] who had themselves been lifted from the dreadful

[1] John Winthrop, Journal, edited by James Hosmer (New York, 1908), I, 177.

[2] There were two terms in common use through the period with which this paper deals: real saint and visible saint. Usually the terms were used synonymously to indicate a regenerate person. Occasionally, the term real saint was used to emphasize regeneration, and carried the implication that a visible saint was merely an outwardly moral person. For example, when the First Congregational church at Mansfield was attacked by a group of Separatists who claimed that the unregenerate were allowed to receive the Lord's Supper, the church replied that in the admission of members it looked for evidence that the applicant was a "visible Saint." This phrase was then crossed out, and "real Saint" was substituted. I will use the term real saint in this paper, unless, of course, I am directly quoting the sources. Mansfield First Congregational church, Records, volume "A", 58, MSS, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, all churches referred to will be Congregational, and all records referred to will be the MSS records at the Connecticut State Library. Wherever an ecclesiastical society, or parish, has changed its name after incorporation as a town, I will include the original society name in parenthesis in the footnotes.

condition of "natural men", and who were, therefore, able to discern grace in others. Had this saintly audience been satisfied with what it had just heard, the men professing conversion would have been given permission to form themselves into a church.

On this occasion, however, the saints were dissatisfied. "The reason was, for that most of them (Mr. [Richard] Mather and one more excepted) had builded their comfort of salvation upon unsound grounds, viz., some upon dreams and ravishes of spirit by fits; others upon the reformation of their lives; others upon duties and performances. . . ." The saints concluded that because of these imperfections, "they had never truly closed with Christ (or rather Christ with them)."

The Dorchester residents were denied the right to form a church because New England had determined that in her churches none but the regenerate would partake of the Lord's Supper. The American Puritans were attempting to create a "pure church."

Had there been at Dorchester that day in 1636 an observer not involved in the Puritan enterprise and endowed with a sense of history, the prospects for the success of this venture would have appeared impossibly remote to him. For the pure church that the Puritans were attempting to create had behind it a tradition of failure stretching back over fifteen hundred years.

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We may leave aside the question as to whether Jesus Christ did not in fact attempt to establish such a church without detracting from the antiquity of the ideal. The pure church was a major problem in the second century when it was espoused by the Montanists.[3] This "heresy" centered around the sacrament of Penance, but the basic question was over membership in the Christian community.

Montanus and his followers, the prophetesses Prisca and Maximilla appeared in Phrygia during a local but severe persecution of the Christians. They, or the Spirit through them, proclaimed the imminent coming of the New Jerusalem, and they welcomed martyrdom. Like most sects excited by "lively eschatological expectations"[4] the Montanists had little regard for institutions dedicated to the permanence of the human race and its failings. The Montanists rejected the church as an institution in which men progressed in grace. In fact, progression in grace was a thought alien to them; the moment of seizure by the Holy Ghost was all, and conversion came at a moment. They excluded from their communion all who were obviously unconverted, that is, all

[3]The following account is based upon the following: Pierre de Labriolle, "Les Sources de l'Histoire du Montanisme," Collectanea Friburgensia, New Series, XXIV (1913); John Chapman, "Montanists," Catholic Encyclopedia, X (1913), 521ff.; H. L. Lawlor, "Montanism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII (1916), 828-832. Adolph Harnack, Outlines of the History of Dogma (Boston, 1957), chapter III, "The Old Christianity and the New Church."

[4]Harnack, p. 102.

who had committed mortal sins after baptism. The most famous Montanist, Tertullian, denied the power of the Church to forgive mortal sins under any circumstances.

In reaction to Montanism, the Church made even greater use of its means of grace, especially the sacrament of Penance. While it was apparently accepted from the very beginning of the Christian Church that the words of Jesus to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," referred to the forgiveness of sins, there was a general belief that certain sins were unforgiveable. The "Pastor" of Hermas (middle second century) excluded blasphemy and betrayal of the brethren from those sins which could be forgiven. He also limited forgiveness of other mortal sins to the first offense. This represented for the time a liberal attitude since it claimed forgiveness for such previously unpardonable sins as idolatry, homicide, adultery and fornication. By the middle of the third century, however, the Church went even further in its claims, and Pope Cornelius forgave and received back into communion those who had renounced Christianity under threat of persecution (the so-called "lapsi"). By the time of St. Jerome, the sacrament of Penance was well established within the Catholic Church, and had become the symbolical "plank after the shipwreck of baptism."

That the defeat of Montanist ideas and the extension of the Church's authority to forgive all sins was of the greatest importance in the development of Christianity, no one would deny. In the view of Adolph Harnack, "only then was the Church idea radically and totally changed. The Church includes the pure and the impure (like Noah's Ark); its members are not collectively holy and every one is by no means sure of blessedness. The Church, solely in virtue of its endowments, is holy. . .the Church is an indispensable salvation institute, so that no one will be blessed who remains without; it is also societas fidei but not fidelium, rather it is a training-school and cultus-institute for salvation."[5]

The catholicity of the Church was, thus, assured long before its marriage to the Empire, and the Medieval church included all souls born within the limits of Christendom. Since not all these souls would eventually reach Heaven, there was a logical distinction made between the visible, or physical church, and the invisible church, known only to God, the Communion of Saints. Through membership in the visible church, one was led by means of the sacraments, especially Penance, into the invisible church. Pretty much the whole raison d'etre of the Medieval Church, in addition to supplying jobs, was the "loosing" of sins. This was very often

[5]Harnack, p. 102.

carried to the most shameful legalistic extremes, since the belief that the sacraments had an efficacy of and in themselves (opus operatum) was easily corrupted into the fantasy that grace could be purchased. Thus, the selling of indulgences.

The Protestant Reformation gave new energy to the pure church ideal, but again, it was found impossible to attain the reality. Martin Luther, in liberating men from the meaningless legalism of Medieval Christianity, followed a course which led him to the pure church.[6] He seems to have seriously considered for a time the creation of a church within the church at Wittenberg, but at last his reliance upon the coercive arm of the state and his rather conservative sacramental thought induced Luther to retain the idea of the church as a mixed body of saints and sinners.[7]

The vanguard of the pure church passed to the "Anabaptists."[8] The most spectacular of these sects were those

[6]James Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation (New York, 1963), volume III, 280-297 gives a good account of Luther's ideas and practices in the matter of church organization, and the following is based mainly on this book.

[7]Mackinnon, III, 287; Harnack, pp. 565-567. Harnack believes Luther was approaching the opus operatum idea of the Scholastics.

[8]I use the word loosely, as it was in the sixteenth century, to denote those who broke away from the various established churches. See Franklin H. Littell, The Anabaptist View of the Church (Boston, 1958) for a more precise definition.

led by Thomas Muntzer and Jan Matthys, who seemed to wish to purify the world by a general massacre of the unregenerate. In less drastic form, this desire to form a communion of saints upon earth is characteristic of the entire Anabaptist movement, much more characteristic, for example, than re-baptism or adult baptism.[9] In Zurich, Conrad Grebel and his colleagues fell out with Zwingli, not over re-baptism which they first practiced in January 1525, but over their attempts in 1523 to establish a pure church by barring the unconverted from the Table, and by making church finances independent of civil authorities. Indeed, the re-baptism of Grebel was looked upon by his adherents as a "separation from the world."[10]

It was by the most notorious enthusiasts that the whole Anabaptist movement was judged, and the pure church ideal found it hard to survive the infamies of Munster. John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion represents the expulsion from the main stream of the Reformation of the pure church ideal. For him the sacraments were not at all symbols of the perfection of the participant, but

[9]Littell, Introduction, p. xvii. See also A. H. Newman, A History of the Baptist Church in America (New York, 1894), p. 3; E. Belfort Bax, Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists (New York, 1903), p. 10.

[10]"Reminiscences of George Blaurock, from the Hutterite Chronicle, 1525." in George H. Williams, editor, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers. Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation (Philadelphia, 1957).

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aids for poor sinners. The sacraments were "seals" which God attached to His promise of grace, and were effective in transferring this grace from God to man, not because of any quality inherent in the sacrament, but through the faith of the communicant, or child in baptism. Calvin's reasoning seems circular, and was attacked on such grounds, but Calvin maintained that a man's faith was never perfect, and needed to be sustained and increased through the sacraments. He attacked those who asserted that "our faith cannot be made better if it is already good, because it is not faith unless it leans unshaken, firm and steadfast upon God's mercy. It would have been better for them to pray with the apostles that the Lord increase their faith than confidently to pretend such perfection of faith as no one of the children of men ever attained or ever will attain in this life." And he turned the tables on such enemies by declaring, ". . .if they confess themselves sinners (which, willy nilly they cannot deny), they must charge it to the imperfection of their faith."[11] The logic of any "pure" church ideal ran straight to the terrible heresy of "familism", the idea that a saint may do as he wants, for he can never sin. Unless a man could claim such perfection as John of Leyden, with all the consequences, he was unfit for the sacraments.

[11]John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), Book 4, Chapter XIV, paragraph 7.

Calvin consistently rejected such ideas, and spoke constantly about a man's progress in grace. Writing against Servetus, Calvin protested that, "it is foolish to seek in a man on the first day that perfection which baptism invites us to advance by continual steps throughout life."[12]

In applying these ideas to the Lord's Supper, he specifically and strongly rejected the idea that a man must be aware of his sainthood in order to partake of the sacrament. It was necessary for the communicant to "descend into himself, and ponder with himself whether he rest with inward assurance of heart upon the salvation purchased by Christ . . .whether he desires to cherish, protect and help his [brethren. . .etc.] Not that these duties both of faith and of love can now be made perfect in us, but that we should endeavor and aspire toward this end in order that we may day by day increase our faith once begun."[13]

Calvin was insistent that it was the duty of every Christian to partake of the Supper and to do so much more frequently than was customary in the Middle Ages.[14] He felt that the Roman Church was too restrictive about Communion and drove away those with "pitiable consciences."[15]

[12]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVI, paragraph 31.

[13]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVI, paragraph 40.

[14]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVII, paragraph 45.

[15]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVII, paragraph 46.

But many Protestants, he felt, were falling into the same error. There were "others agreeing with us, that worthiness itself consists in faith and love, who still are far in error on the standard of worthiness, requiring as they do, a perfection of faith which cannot at all be attained . . . ."[16] To those who held back from the Table because they felt themselves unworthy, Calvin answered with Chrysostom that in that case they were not worthy to enter the church at all.[17]

The pure church fared even worse in England where it led a subversive and underground existence. "The one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England is that it was an act of State."[18] Henry VIII had no intention whatever of creating a church composed of a few saints.[19] As the King had authority over the bodies of all Englishmen, so now, as Head of the Church, he would have authority over their souls. The Books of Common Prayer issued during the reign of Edward VI were obviously based upon the assumption that all Englishmen belonged to the

[16]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVII, paragraph 42.

[17]Calvin, Book 4, Chapter XVII, paragraph 45.

[18]Maurice Powicke, The Reformation in England (London, 1961), p. 1.

[19]See Edmund Morgan's comment: "[Henry] had few aspirations toward purity, either personal or ecclesiastical. . . ." Visible Saints ([New York], 1963), p. 5.

national church.[20] Under Elizabeth, the pure church was specifically rejected in the Thirty-Nine Articles.[21]

In opposition to the state church, some "Separatists" established sects, or cells, on the basis of a covenant voluntarily entered into, promising to refrain from "ungodlie communion," which meant the Anglican church, and by extension, no doubt, the "world." While those who dared practice such ideas were a small and suppressed minority, there were many Englishmen who managed to marry a belief in a system of locally autonomous churches, with an acceptance of the state church. These "non-separating Congregationalists" were the Puritans of New England, and once in America they put into practice what they had long believed to be the only form of church polity approved by God. This meant that each congregation administered its own discipline. It also meant, as we have seen, that each church must be composed exclusively of the regenerate.[22]

[20]Absence from church on Sunday and holy days was a criminal offense in the First and Second Acts of Uniformity (1549, 1552).

[21]See Articles XVI, XIX, XXVI.

[22]There is still a lively debate among historians as to the reasons for the Puritans' decision to exclude the unconverted from church membership. Perry Miller and Edmund Morgan argue that the pure church was part of the intellectual baggage carried over by the "non-Separating Congregationalists" from England. In America the practice of a pure church finally became practical, but the theory was well established before the Puritans boarded the Arbella.
A counter-argument is offered by Larzer Ziff and

Previous attempts at a pure church system had been defeated by the opposition of a powerful church organization, usually aided by the state. In New England, this could not happen, for in this empty land there were no bishops, and the saints themselves held sceptre and sword. Paradoxically, it was this very fact that posed the gravest threat to the pure church in New England. The Puritans, in England, had always recognized the benefit of a church-state connection and in New England, where the saints held power, there could be no question of a religious establishment. The city upon the hill was to give example to the world, and it was imperative that state and church work together. Citizenship therefore depended upon church membership; the minister's wages were guaranteed by the state; the unregenerate were forced to attend those sermons which had, one hoped, some influence in checking the carnal man's propensity to disturb the social order.

The Puritan ministry was from the first aware that

Darrett Rutman. They believe that the Puritans had no firm conclusions about the subject of church polity when they stepped upon our shore. It was the "free aire" of a virgin continent that persuaded the Puritans to experiment with a pure church.

See: Miller, Orthodoxy In Massachusetts (Cambridge, Mass., 1933); Morgan, Visible Saints; John New, Anglican and Puritan (Stanford, 1964); Rutman, Winthrop's Boston (Chapel Hill, 1965); Ziff, The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience (Princeton, 1962); David D. Hall, "John Cotton's Letter to Samuel Skelton," William and Mary Quarterly, XXII (July, 1965), 478-485; Ziff, "The Salem Puritans in the 'Free Aire of a New World,'" Huntington Library Quarterly, XX (1957), 373-384.

there were dangers involved in the world, and warned against any compromise of the religious ideal. Ironically, it was not the merchant class which posed the main threat to Winthrop's vision, but the clergy itself. The Puritans had just begun to create a pure church system[23] when in response to the Antinomian crisis, the New England ministers turned toward a more formal church structure. The clergy not only came together in synod, they also began to stress the importance of the work of preparation in the process of conversion.[24] This was a powerful means of enhancing the power of the minister, who became something of an expert in disposing the unconverted toward the reception of grace.

New England thus began her evangelical tradition, in which sinners were to be brought to Christ through the ministry of the Word. The Puritan church became less a holy community as it became more the means through which individuals were saved. This process reached its culmination with Solomon Stoddard who was the greatest evangelist in New England history before the Great Awakening, the greatest champion of clerical authority in the history of New England Congregationalism, and the greatest exponent of unregenerate

[23]Morgan, Visible Saints, p. 102 takes an act of the Massachusetts General Court of 1636 as "the official establishment of the new system."

[24]Perry Miller, "'Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth Century New England," Journal of the History of Ideas, IV (June, 1943), 253-286.

church membership.

It was obvious by the middle of the seventeenth century that the pure church was under severe strain. The Half-Way Covenant, adopted in 1662, was an attempt to preserve the pure church by relieving social pressures. While a profession of grace remained necessary for attendance at the Lord's Supper, the privilege of having one's children baptized was conceded to those unregenerate persons who had some sort of "tribal" connection with the Puritan churches.[25] The Half-Way Covenant was generally unsatisfactory to the clergy and a more consistent method was devised in which to establish something like a national church within the ideological framework of the pure church. Admissions were simply made easier. Instead of a public profession, private professions were accepted. The minister was given full power over admissions in many churches, and they seem to have exercised considerable charity in judging experience. An even more radical departure from the earlier pure church ideal was the practice adopted by numerous churches of urging those to come to the Communion who felt themselves to be unconverted. This was done on the basis that objectively considered, the person was a "visible saint" in the eyes of his

[25]Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Family (New York, [1966]) coins the term "Puritan Tribalism" to describe that reluctance of the Puritans to concede that those outside their group were equally loved by God.

neighbors. This practice denied, in fact, though never in theory, the importance of subjective assurance.[26]

The settlement of Connecticut was in itself a step away from the pure church. Although Thomas Hooker was committed to the idea of a regenerate communion, he was quite liberal in judging experience.[27] Furthermore, the connection between church and state in Connecticut was perhaps even stronger than it had been in Massachusetts, where

[26]This practice is associated with Increase Mather and will be discussed in chapter II. 48-49.

[27]Charles McLean Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History (New Haven, 1934-1938), II, 84. In 1664 the Connecticut General Assembly considered a petition "from severall persons of this Colony, that they are agrieved that they are not interteined in church fellowship; This Court haveing duely considered the same, desireing that the rules of Christ may be attended, doe commend it to the ministers and churches in this Colony to consider whither it be not their duty to enterteine all such persons, whoe are of an honest and godly conversation, haveing a competency of knowledg in the principles of religion, and shall desire to joyne with them in church fellowship, by an explicitt covenant, and that all the children of the church be accepted and accounted reall members of the church, and that the church exercise a due christian care and watch over them; and that when they are growne up, being examined by the officer in the presence of the church, it appeares, in the judgment of charity, they are duely qualified to perticipate in that great ordinance of the Lord's Supper, by their being able to examine themselves and discerne the Lords body, such persons be admitted to full communion." The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford, 1872), IX, 437-438.

The Assembly was significantly quiet about the requirement of regeneration; the last phrase "able to discern the Lord's Body" was used by those who advocated unregenerate communion, but whether the Assembly was taking that position is unclear. It is obvious, however, that the Assembly was in favor of greater numbers becoming full members of the churches. It is also clear that the format of admission--especially the public examination--is pure church.

numbers of "strangers" were flooding in and where the unregenerate were active in local government. In Connecticut, a population twice strained by emigration might conceivably be for the most part regenerate. If so, Connecticut would have achieved the best of all churches--one in which only saints were admitted, but one in which nearly everyone in the colony was a member.

In reality Connecticut faced the same problems that the Bay Colony had had to solve, and Connecticut was unable to devise any better solutions. In Connecticut, as in Massachusetts, the Half-Way Covenant was widely practiced, and in Connecticut, as in the older colony, communicants were a small minority of the adult population. A true system of pure churches would have had to involve some measure of disestablishment in Connecticut, at least in order to free the minister's salary from the control of the parish, which was predominantly made up of those not in full communion with the church. Instead, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, church and state were still intimately associated. The Saybrook Platform, adopted by the General Assembly in 1708, created a system of Associations, which were ministerial meetings organized by counties, and Consociations, which were basically Association meetings at which lay messengers were present. A General Association was established in 1738. Although the exact powers of the Associations were unclear, they did gain the power to license

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preachers and could therefore control the quality of the ministry.

In Connecticut new settlements were organized as ecclesiastical societies, or parishes, and the General Court did not grant land unless the prospective settlers offered proof of their ability to support a minister. In consequence, ministerial salaries were good. In addition the clergy enjoyed a secure tenure, largely because of the practice of giving each new minister a "settlement" or lump sum payment at his ordination. This practice discouraged frequent changes of pastors, as the "settlement" was not refundable.[28] Most ministers remained their entire lifetime at one parish. In New London County, for example, during the period of upheaval caused by the Great Awakening, there were twenty-one ministers. Sixteen of them served their parishes until removed by death; their average length

[28] For example, William Seward received £140 per annum at Killingworth North Church in 1738. Timothy Collins started at £57 in 1721 at Litchfield, which was just being settled. By 1740 his salary was £170 p.a.. Green Farms parish of Fairfield offered Daniel Chapman, Sr., a salary of £70 per year in 1711, even though the community had only eight church members.

Settlements were usually quite generous and often exceeded one or two years salary. David Rowland was granted £700 at Plainfield First Church in 1747; his annual salary was £400 and firewood. Groton usually gave its new ministers a settlement of £400, four times the annual salary it could offer. Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College (New York, 1885), I, 65, 182-183, 512-513; Plainfield First, Records, I, 3; Charles R. Stark, Groton, Connecticut, 1705-1905 (Stonington, Conn., 1922), pp. 196-197.

of service was 43.4 years. Even in Fairfield county, where eight of seventeen ministers in the same period were dismissed for various reasons, the average tenure of the dismissed ministers was eighteen years.[29] The average candidate for the clergy must have felt that with reasonable skill or luck, his first pulpit would be permanent, or if worst came to worst, he would have from ten to twenty years of experience when he looked for his second.

In return for these benefits, the Connecticut clergy had to compromise with a society becoming less simple, and perhaps more secular. Even though Connecticut remained always economically backward in comparison to her neighbors, Massachusetts and New York, she was the fourth most populous colony from 1660 to 1750, and her population rose very rapidly in the second decade of the eighteenth century.[30] The growth of a more sophisticated society and a more specialized economy is seen in the emergence of a professional class of physicians and lawyers, which Franklin B. Dexter says was achieved by 1745. From 1701 to 1745, Yale graduated thirty-three lawyers and thirty doctors, with the bulk of

[29]These averages were compiled with the aid of the list of ministers in Connecticut in Leonard Bacon, editor, Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut (New Haven, 1861).

[30]The Statistical History of the United States (Stamford, Connecticut, 1965), p. 756.

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such graduates coming after 1720.[31] Connecticut, like provincial America as a whole, had lost its immunity to the three plagues enumerated by William Byrd II, "priests, lawyers and physicians."

Many of the secular leaders of this society held power in the church, through their control of the parish meeting, at which the tax-payers settled all of the secular concerns of the church, and most importantly, the minister's salary.[32] In theory, the choice of minister was entirely up to the church members; in fact there had to be close cooperation between church and parish. In the early settlements these two bodies may have been composed of the same individuals, but by 1740 it is obvious that many parishes were controlled by persons not in full communion with the church.[33]

The clergy, for its part, played an active role in the world. They took their obligation as a learned and leisured class seriously, and excelled in purely secular pursuits. Jared Eliot, pastor at Killingworth from 1709 to 1763, is an outstanding example. A noted physician and botanist, member of the Royal Society, he was the inventor of

[31] Dexter, Yale Graduates, I, 773.

[32] The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, VI, 34.

[33] This will be discussed in chapter V, 144-145.

the wheat drill.[34] In education the clergy enjoyed a near monopoly; Wheelock and Clap come to mind immediately, but even so obscure a figure as James Lockwood, Pastor at Wethersfield, had been offered the presidency of both Yale and Princeton, and left in his estate 118 volumes, eighteen of them works by Shakespeare.[35] The clergy even offered chaplains to armed expeditions, and the Reverend Simon Backus, of Newington parish (Wethersfield) died at his post in Louisburg in 1745.[36] (One wonders if the army were covenanted?) Finally, the clergy offered political advice and direction, and even, in 1707, gave one of their members to the colony as Governor.[37]

It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the extent to which Connecticut had progressed toward a state church. Settlement in a new land encouraged the laity to a greater assertiveness in the affairs of the church, as Sumner Powell points out in his study of the settlement of Sudbury, Massachusetts.[38] Leadership in a Congregational church was

[34]Dexter, Yale Graduates, I, 52-55.

[35]Dexter, Yale Graduates, I, 538-541.

[36]Dexter, Yale Graduates, I, 294-295.

[37]Gurdon Saltonstall served as pastor at New London from 1691 to 1707, and as Governor of Connecticut from 1707 to 1724. Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1936), VII, 317-318. Hereafter this will be cited as DAB.

[38]Sumner Powell, Puritan Village (Middletown, Connecticut, 1963), Chapter VII, "Church Affairs."

never assured to a minister; it required of him an exercise of democratic statesmanship, or the possession of a personal charisma. Under these circumstances, it often happened that leadership was lacking within the church, and that church meetings degenerated into scenes of unchristian strife. In the life of every Congregational church there occurred periodically two events which demonstrated the instability of the church establishment in Connecticut.

The first was the inevitable need to construct a new meetinghouse. This invariably created factions within the church, usually based upon geography, each side trying to get the meetinghouse as close to them as possible. The expenditure upon a new meetinghouse was large, and created considerable interest among the parish tax-payers. A mere perusal of church records is enough to convince one that many parishes came not peacefully into the world, but with a long and bitter labor. The most spectacular example, no doubt, was the ten year dispute at Simsbury which finally resulted in the establishment of four parishes in 1736 where there had been only one before.[39] The minister was nearly always opposed to such schisms, but was generally powerless to prevent them.

[39]John E. Ellsworth, Simsbury, 1642-1935 (Simsbury, 1945), pp. 43-44. See also Ola Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill (New York, 1952) for the incredibly disruptive forces unleashed by the need for a new meetinghouse.

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The situation of a congregational church was at its most critical point whenever it lost a pastor. The usual procedure in order to find a replacement was to have a recent graduate of Yale, licensed by one of the clerical Associations, come to the church and preach from Sabbath to Sabbath on a trial basis, which differed widely in duration from church to church. When it was finally moved in a parish meeting to give the young man a call to settle, there was nearly always some opposition, and the prudent candidate refused to settle on less than a unanimous vote, knowing that a faction opposed to him at ordination would probably remain implacable. One of the most extreme examples of the difficulty in settling a minister comes from the Colchester First Church, which went for twenty years with fifteen different probationary ministers before a pastor was finally ordained.[40]

When all this has been said, however, one may still conclude that the progress of events from 1636 to 1700 in Connecticut was in the direction of a "national" church,

[40]"Diary of Mrs. Abia Munn," Colchester First, Records, II, 23.

and away from the "pure" church.[41] That this progress was fitful is also true. But at the turn of the century, Solomon Stoddard appeared upon the scene, and prospects for the total defeat of the pure church ideal took a quantum leap.

[41]In this chapter, I have avoided the terms "sect" and "church" in reference to, respectively, a pure church and an established church. This omission is based upon a fear that the terms "church" and "sect" are too closely related to the work of Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr. (The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, and The Social Sources of Denominationalism, respectively.)

As used by Troeltsch and Niebuhr, the terms "church" and "sect" are not descriptive of the situation in Connecticut in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Troeltsch's "church" is that of the Medieval Roman Catholic church, and nobody in Connecticut wished to see a return to those conditions. The term "sect" will probably call to the reader's mind Niebuhr's "church of the disinherited." The pure church in Connecticut was too widely held an ideal to be associated with any one class, much less any class suffering economic distress. Those who believed in the pure church in Connecticut had an idea, rather than a grievance.

Despite these difficulties, the terms "church" and "sect" are convenient and will be used in the following pages. The reader must remember that they are being used in a strictly relative way, so that when you read the word "church" I ask you to add "as opposed to a sect-type." The terms are used to indicate direction rather than realities. Logically, perhaps, the "church" would have led to Rome, and the "sect" to Munster, but in Connecticut both sides stopped thousands of miles short of these destinations.

Chapter II

SOLOMON STODDARD

In the history of the pure church in Connecticut, the town of Northampton, Massachusetts was of great importance. Situated on the Connecticut River, about forty miles above Hartford, it was the Vatican from which the "Pope of the Valley", Solomon Stoddard, sent the word down to Connecticut to open wide the doors of the church and to let the unregenerate come forward to the Communion Table.

Fate, however, had decreed that Stoddard would breed his own nemesis, and from 1729 to 1750 the pastor at Northampton was Stoddard's grandson, Jonathan Edwards. It was at Northampton that Edwards finally took the pure church position that his followers would later carry to victory in Connecticut.

The struggle for a pure church was regarded by contemporaries as a struggle between the ideas of Stoddard and of Edwards. A Presbyterian minister in New York City, writing in 1768, prefaced his contribution to the controversy by remarking that, "I had some thought of using the words Stoddardians and Edwardians, (after sufficiently explaining my meaning) as Mr. Stoddard and Mr. Edwards, have been the two most noted Men in our Part of the World, who have writ on opposite Sides of the Question." For unexplained reasons, he decided instead to call the two sides

"(1) Those that admit graceless Persons. (2) Those that admit only gracious Persons."[1] This chapter will examine Stoddard's ideas on the Lord's Supper and the extent to which his ideas prevailed in Connecticut.

Solomon Stoddard was baptized in Boston in 1643, the son of a wealthy merchant.[2] He graduated from Harvard in 1662, served the college as a librarian for a time, and spent two years in Barbadoes as a chaplain. In 1669 he was at Boston, his gear already aboard ship, according to legend, preparing to leave for England, when he received a call from the Northampton church. He accepted and was voted a salary of £100 per annum. In September, 1672 he was ordained. He remained in his pulpit until his death in 1729, although he had become somewhat feeble and deaf in his old age, and had to employ a colleague pastor, his famous grandson, from 1727 to 1729.

During a ministry of nearly sixty years he built up a tremendous personal following in his own town, and exerted a considerable intellectual force throughout New England.

[1]Jacob Green, An Inquiry into the Jewish Church (New York, 1768), preface. For the full title of this and other eighteenth century pamphlets, consult the bibliography.

[2]The following is based upon: Harry G. Swanhart, "Solomon Stoddard" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1961); Perry Miller, "Solomon Stoddard," Harvard Theological Review, XXIV (October, 1941), 277-320; John L. Sibley, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1873-), II, 111-122; Henry B. Parkes, "Solomon Stoddard," DAB, XVIII, 59-60.

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Within a dozen years of his death, Stoddard was clearly a member of the Puritan pantheon. George Whitefield equated a neglect of Stoddard's works on conversion with religious decay. Jonathan Edwards was obviously pleased with his kinship to the great man. And finally, New Lights claimed him as a New Light; Old Lights as one of them. Stoddard's reputation began to slide into its present obscurity only in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The doctrines he preached--"Stoddardism"--should be considered as a unitary system. There is instead a tendency to see Stoddard as three distinct beings; the revivalist, the frontier pragmatist, and the Presbyterian. Because the most remarkable feature of Stoddardism was the open communion, his theory of the Lord's Supper has received considerable attention.

Stoddard argued that ministers must admit every morally upright person to the sacrament, even if that person was, in his own judgment, and in the judgment of all others, devoid of saving grace. It has been generally assumed that Stoddard was liberalizing the requirements for admission into the congregational churches. The issue is more complex.

Stoddard himself defended his system as a stricter one than that of his arch rival, Increase Mather. In his <u>Appeal to the Learned</u>, Stoddard made the point that Mather allowed persons to come to the Table on the basis of a

"probable hope" of conversion. Stoddard further charged Mather with practicing the open communion himself. "I was informed by a Minister of good account in these Churches, that Mr. Mather told him, 'That if a Church Member should be convinced that he had not a Saving work of Conversion, he would advise him to come to the Lord's Supper'."[3] Stoddard claimed that in the actual practice of admissions, he and Mather were doing the same thing. But, according to Stoddard, because Mather paid lip service to the pure church ideal, he led unregenerate persons to flatter themselves that since they enjoyed the privileges peculiar to the regenerate, they must themselves be in that state.[4] Such, for Stoddard, was the explanation for the "perishing condition" of New England. "Some Ministers speak a great deal to Saints to comfort and incourage them; and alas, there be but a few of them real Saints."[5]

So, while it is true that Stoddard invited the unregenerate to communion, so did his opponents. This was

[3]Solomon Stoddard, An Appeal to the Learned (Boston, 1709), p. 37. Mather never denied this quote, but Stoddard was obviously misrepresenting his opponent. Mather believed that a person in doubt about his state of grace should receive the Communion if the congregation found him a visible saint. A person "convinced" of his unregenerate state would not be admitted.

[4]Solomon Stoddard, The Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship (Boston, 1708), pp. 19, 21.

[5]Solomon Stoddard, The Presence of Christ with the Ministers of the Gospel (Boston, 1718), p. 26.

Stoddard's oft-repeated charge, and the records in Connecticut indicate a number of churches in which the necessity of a profession of faith did not, in the eyes of the more "strict" Congregationalists, exclude the unregenerate. Even the Mathers constantly admitted that no test devised or applied by men could keep out all hypocrites; they contended only that the number of hypocrites was small. For Stoddard, the number was far too large.

The question of which system was more restrictive, or more liberal is, however, of no real importance, and has done much to distort our understanding of "Stoddardism". For if we think of the Lord's Supper as central to Stoddard's thought, we miss the point of his whole scheme. Open admission to communion was only part of, and can be discussed only in relation to, an attempt by the Northampton minister to achieve a basic reorganization of New England Congregationalism.

Although the issue soon enough shifted to the Communion, Stoddard's first essay in the whole controversy, The Doctrine of the Instituted Churches,[6] was far more concerned with the power of ministers vis-a-vis the congregation, and with the organization of a "National Church." This had been a matter of controversy in Massachusetts for

[6]Solomon Stoddard, The Doctrine of Instituted Churches (London, [1700]).

some time and had already caused the rise of factions to whom labels were given. Those who believed that the minister had no special power over the congregation were called "strict congregationalists," while those who tended to exalt the authority of the minister were "large Congregationalists."[7] Stoddard belonged to the latter group.

In his Doctrine of Instituted Churches, Stoddard speaks of the "Catholic Church" of which "Particular Churches are but parts and branches."[8] This "Catholic Church" is not, however, a world-wide, visible Church, as the Church of Rome claims to be. There is no "instituted Ecumenical Church."[9] The largest visible Church is the "National Church", and this is what Stoddard wished to establish in New England.

Although it is often said that Stoddard dissolved the covenant theory upon which Congregationalism was built, he really only enlarged the covenant to include the whole

[7]The Connecticut General Court to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 1676: "Our people, in this colony, are some of them strict congregational men, others more large congregational men, and moderate presbyterians. The congregational men, of both parts, are the greatest part of the people in this colony." Quoted in Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut, 1630-1764 (New Haven, 1818), I, 468. It would be tempting to read "large" and "strict" as describing terms of admission to the Lord's Supper, but the text does not seem to support such an interpretation. See also, on this point, Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston, 1842), p. 19 footnote.

[8]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 5.

[9]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 29.

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nation.[10] God makes His covenant with the whole people, as He did with the Hebrews.[11] Of course, this enlarging of the covenant had tremendous consequences.

First of all, it enabled Stoddard to deny the validity of "This Doctrine of the Particular Covenant."[12] A "provincial Church" receives its authority from its relationship to the National Church. Since all society exists for the purpose of worshipping God,[13] for which reason God picks out a chosen race, particular churches need not be based upon the consent of the worshippers, which the particular covenant represents; each church may command the local residents to attend worship because these people have, whether they like it or not, been born into a covenanted society. "If a Christian live in a Town, where there is a Church, he is immediately bound to joyn that Church. . ."[14] We are members of the National Church by baptism, and members of particular churches by residence. Stoddard points out that the doctrine of individual covenants led to such

[10]It is sufficient to say that this is Perry Miller's thesis, and has been followed by many others, as, for example, Swanhart. See Miller, The New England Mind. From Colony to Province (Boston, 1961), p. 237; Swanhart, "Solomon Stoddard," Introduction.

[11]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 26.

[12]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 8.

[13]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 25.

[14]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 8.

confusion as the case where a father might be in covenant with one church, his wife with a second, their child baptized in a third, and the family living in the parish of a fourth church. To which church does the child belong?[15] Stoddard was doing to the covenant what Copernicus did to the Ptolemaic universe; not destroying, but simplifying it.

The ruling body in Stoddard's National Church was to be a National Synod. According to Stoddard both Scripture and reason told us plainly that "A National Synod is the highest Ecclesiastical Authority upon Earth."[16] Stoddard, however, was reluctant to adopt an outright Presbyterian model. A ruling by the National Synod was never to be considered as final, and it was the duty of each minister to search his conscience about the rightness of anything the Synod "recommended."[17] All in all, one cannot escape the conclusion that Stoddard thought of the National Synod as a court of final appeal in matters of censure and excommunication. As we shall see, Stoddard proposed to tighten the minister's rule over the congregation, and the National Synod would presumably operate to insure that no minister became too autonomous, or, perhaps, too tyrannical.

[15] Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 8.

[16] Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 29. He found the Scottish Church ideally organized.

[17] Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 32.

It is significant, also, to note that Stoddard never clarified his thoughts on the authority to ordain. The most distinct mark of the Congregational system was the ability of each congregation to choose and ordain its own minister. In practice, certainly by 1700, it was customary for the congregation to call in a council of ministers from the neighborhood to examine the candidate, and to ordain him. Nevertheless, the New England churches usually stressed their right to "lay" ordination in "emergencies."[18]

Stoddard concedes this right, but only in those countries "where the Church is not in order. . . ."[19] He approaches Presbyterianism most closely when he speaks about "some Persons being to be entrusted with the office of being Ministers of Christ, who have no call to any particular Congregation. . . ."[20] In traditional New England practice it was simply impossible for a person to be ordained without having been called by a settled congregation. In fact, much of the Old Light opposition to itinerant preachers was based upon the belief that ordination was never a general warrant to preach wherever one was blown.[21] In Connecticut,

[18]In 1770 the church at Somers ordained its minister without clerical assistance. Somers, Records, p. 6.

[19]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 14.

[20]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 14.

[21]The Connecticut General Court voted in 1742 to forbid "such persons that have no ecclesiastical characters or license to preach, as such as have received ordination or

if a minister was dismissed from his congregation, he ceased to be a minister. Stoddard seems to deny this. ". . .Every Man that is a Pastor of a particular Church stands in a more General relation, to his flock as a Minister of Christ; some that are not Pastors to particular Congregations are yet Ministers of Christ. . . ."[22] But these remarks had been prefaced with the statement that a minister derived his power from the call to a particular church.

One of the clearest affirmations of the Congregational way in New England was the necessity for every new Pastor to be ordained, no matter how often he had been ordained before.[23] Of this practice, Stoddard said only that, "A Minister removing from one Church to another, may be ordained a second time. . . ."[24] The only conclusion one can reach is that the initiative in ordination remained with

license to preach by any association or presbytery" to conduct religious services in Connecticut. The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, VIII, 457.

[22]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 11.

[23]I know of only one such exception in Connecticut, that of the installation of William Drummond at New Canaan in 1772. That case was considered exceptional. Drummond recorded that "I was ordained before I left Scotland and produced my credentials before the Council which were satisfactory, so that the Pastoral care of this church was committed to me without repeating the solemnity of ordination." New Canaan, Records, I, 51.

[24]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 15. Emphasis mine.

the particular congregation, but that once a man had become a minister, he received an authority beyond the power of his congregation to recall.

Stoddard's concept of the ideal polity of the individual church was far more traditional than his idea of a National Church, but this tradition was undemocratic and authoritarian. Samuel Stone's description of the church as "a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy,"[25] represents the ideal of the New England fathers, but a congregational polity and the conditions of a frontier settlement had worked to give the laity a formidable power within the churches. Stoddard wished to reduce this power to a minimum.[26] He would have allowed the body of the church, the "brethren" or "fraternity" only two powers: (1) to choose the site of the church building and (2) to elect the officers of the church.[27] But, as mentioned above, once the brethren had selected a pastor, they had no more power over him. It is solely in the minister's power to decide who should receive communion.[28] The deacons, or ruling

[25] Samuel Stone's Cathechism (1684), a reprint of the Acorn Club, Introduction, p. 16.

[26] Solomon Stoddard, An Examination of the Power of the Fraternity, published as an appendix to The Presence of Christ with the Ministers of the Gospel.

[27] Stoddard, An Examination of the Power of the Fraternity, p. 9.

[28] Stoddard, An Examination of the Power of the Fraternity, p. 12.

elders, do not even have the right "anyways to intermeddle in that Affair."[29]

The whole aim of Stoddard's system was to ensure that God was served here on earth. Stoddard's constant theme is Man's duty to adore God without expectation of reward. He saw the Church as a tool for this purpose, and he expressed the mission of the ministry in one forceful and eloquent sentence: "The Word is as a Hammer, and we should use it to break the Rocky hearts of Men."[30]

Once it is realized that Stoddard was first and foremost interested in "Presbyterianizing" New England, it is easier to understand his concept of the Lord's Supper. Stoddard himself claimed that his practice of unregenerate communion was inspired by God. "I profess before the World, that God has taught me the Doctrine that I have laid down; partly by giving me a great discovery of the Wisdom in bringing Nations into a Church Estate. . .; partly by opening my Eyes to understand the Scriptures. . . ." That he meant to communicate a more than usual amount of divine enlightment is indicated by his assurance to the reader that

[29]Stoddard, An Examination of the Power of the Fraternity, p. 12.

[30]Stoddard, The Presence of Christ with the Ministers of the Gospel, p. 28.

he is no "Enthusiast."[31]

Be this as it may, the open communion, far from being a liberalization of the Congregational system, actually worked out to buttress at nearly every point Stoddard's authoritarian views on church polity. For example, Stoddard wished to reduce the power of the congregation, and to increase that of the minister. What better method was there than to open up the communion to the unregenerate? With all sorts of unregenerate types coming into full church membership, the power of the congregation would have to be reduced. Otherwise, the "ungodly" would run things. This point should be emphasized. Stoddard was granting full church membership to all with one hand, and taking away the traditional privileges of full membership with the other. It was generally agreed that only the "able" should govern, whether it be in the state or church. Stoddard would create a congregation so "mixed" that any justification for a democratic polity would have disappeared.

But would not the unregenerate now gain the right to select the minister? Stoddard's critics in the nineteenth century felt that this was the most pernicious aspect of Stoddardism. The unregenerate were unconcerned, or even hostile, to "experimental piety" and began to fill the

[31]Stoddard, An Appeal to the Learned, pp. 3-4. He is here answering Increase Mather's charge that he is setting himself up as a prophet.

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pulpits with unconverted ministers. These ministers, of course, could never hope to awaken a congregation, being dead themselves. It followed logically that the Awakening, when it did come, had to begin with an attack upon an unconverted ministry.

However, Stoddard was really conceding nothing to the unregenerate. He probably hoped to have a ministry attached to the "National Church" and to have ordinations controlled by the National Synod. But even in his own day, Stoddardism in this respect, meant little more than recognizing reality. Although the selection of a minister was in the hands of the communicants, his salary was not. The "society" or parish was responsible for determining, collecting and paying the pastor's wages. By 1700, the society was a body of unconverted men, on the whole.[32] In any ordination, there had to be a close cooperation between the church and society to avoid future trouble. It is extremely rare, at least in Connecticut, to find an ordination where the society was not asked to express its consent to a candidate for settlement. Given this state of affairs, Stoddardism offered nothing new to the ungodly.

To take a second example in order to demonstrate that the open communion was designed to support a national church

[32]William H. Wilcoxson, History of Stratford, Connecticut, 1639-1939 (Stratford, 1939), p. 159; Miller, From Colony to Province, p. 243.

rather than to make Congregationalism more liberal, the practice of unregenerate communion was the logical conclusion to the idea that every Christian was bound to join the church nearest him. That church, in turn, "is bound to him to govern him, and give him Christian priviledges . . . ." It should not be thought that Stoddard was making full church membership optional for the unregenerate. He was making it mandatory. Every child born into a covenanted society was obliged to perform all of the religious duties of that society, just as all Jews were required to be circumcised. Indeed, the very title of his second essay on the communion made this clear: The Inexcusableness of Neglecting The Worship of God, Under A Pretence of Being In An Unconverted Condition. Stoddard was at first inclined to be lenient toward the "scrupulous," those too timid to approach the Table because they felt themselves unworthy, but by 1707 Stoddard charged such persons with the possession of "a Prophane spirit."[33]

Stoddard always used the word "lawful" in regard to the Communion. It is lawful that everyone receive the sacrament. But "lawful" in this context does not mean "optional"; it means "mandatory" since the law is in this case

[33]Compare Stoddard's Doctrine of the Instituted Churches, p. 22 with Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship, p. 27.

a positive, Scriptural command: "Do this in memory of Me."[34]

It is true that in debating the pure church with Increase and Cotton Mather, Stoddard developed the idea that the Lord's Supper could be--for some individuals--a "converting ordinance."[35] This idea, however, was never an important part of Stoddard's thought. He destroyed whatever force such an idea might have had when he limited the efficacy of the Communion in conversion to baptized Christians. Increase Mather was quick to spot the inconsistency of Stoddard's argument. If the Lord's Supper was a conversion ordinance, it must be by virtue of qualities inherent in the sacrament. In that case, Stoddard was approaching Popery, which charge was later directly leveled against the Northampton minister. If, on the other hand, the Lord's Supper could convert only Christians, the elements of conversion must be within the Christian, placed there from eternity by God. In other words, the sacrament belonged

[34]The best example of this use of the word "lawful" comes from the trial of Anne Hutchinson. She had defended her private sessions with the neighboring women on the grounds that it was "lawful," and cited Scripture to prove her point. One of her judges, Simon Bradstreet, immediately intervened: "I would ask this question of Mrs. Hutchinson, whether you do think this is lawful? for then this will follow that all other women that do not are in a sin." Mistress Anne backed down and agreed to "further consider of it." Thomas Hutchinson, History of The Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936), edited by Lawrence Shaw Mayo, II, 369.

[35]Stoddard, Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship.

only to the saints.[36]

Stoddard took fright at the charges Mather was able to concoct; for example, that "Mr. S his doctrine has a tendency to break down the enclosure [of the church], and lay it open to the wide World, for almost all comers to enter into it."[37] Stoddard immediately defended himself in his Appeal to the Learned in which he justified his restriction of the converting qualities of the Lord's Supper to those with an "interest" in the sacrifice of the Cross. Stoddard clearly refuted any implication that he held to the opus operatum of the Catholic church. The Lord's Supper might further the work of conversion only as a sermon might. Stoddard rebuked those who, "it seems to me. . .do make an idol of the Lord's Supper, crying it up above all Ordinances both of the Old and New Testament, as if it were as peculiar to Saints as heavenly glory, and to be attended with more reverence than all other Ordinances."[38]

We should consider the Communion as a kind of sermon if we want to get a clear picture of Stoddard's sacramental thought. Everyone in Connecticut was obliged to attend the Sabbath sermon, but most of those who did so would eventually

[36]Increase Mather, The Strange Doctrine Examined and Confuted (Boston, 1708); [Anon.], An Appeal of the Unlearned (Boston, 1709).

[37]Increase Mather, p. 34.

[38]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, pp. 53, 81.

wind up in Hell. So also, those who received the Lord's Supper in a Stoddardean church were not being assured of salvation. In fact, the condition of the unregenerate who had received the Lord's Supper all of his life was even worse for having done so--Stoddard took seriously Paul's warning that they who eat unworthily the Bread and Wine eat their own condemnation.

Stoddard's sacramental theory was not oriented toward the benefits of the Communion for the individual. His major concern was with the community, and Stoddard felt there was great danger to a land where, as he estimated, only 20% of the population were performing their religious duty.[39]

To conclude, Stoddardism was a scheme for the establishment in New England of a "national church" in which every person born within the covenanted people must be baptized, come to sermons, and receive the Communion. If the covenanted society performed its duty to God in an acceptable manner, it would not be unreasonable to expect an increase of God's grace in the land. Stoddard himself enjoyed five "harvests" or revivals between 1679 and 1718.

Stoddard's influence is generally considered to have been of paramount importance in New England from 1700 to the

[39]Stoddard, Doctrine of Instituted Churches, p. 8.

Awakening, and most especially in Connecticut.[40] It is very difficult to assess this influence, and not only because the records are sparse. If we take "Stoddardism" as an attempt to Presbyterianize New England, as I believe it was, it may seem that Stoddard's influence explains Connecticut's adoption of the Saybrook Platform in 1708. However, the Saybrook Platform was a pallid reflection of the institution Stoddard had advocated, for, in reality, the ministerial Associations were defied with absolute impunity.[41] It is erroneous, also, to attribute the Platform too exclusively to Stoddard, because even the Mathers at

[40]Contemporaries like Thomas Prince, Jr. and Timothy Dwight were outspoken critics of Stoddardism, considered as an open communion. They, of course, were reacting emotionally and no doubt exaggerated the prevalence of Stoddardism, just as they exaggerated the extent of Deism, vice, infidelity, and such. Herbert Schneider, The Puritan Mind (New York, [1930]), p. 92; Miller, Colony to Province, p. 284; and Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York, 1957), p. 12 are among modern historians who take it for granted that the Stoddardean practice of an open communion had become standard in Connecticut in the eighteenth century.

[41]While the ministerial Associations were quite powerful in theory, they were in fact reluctant to exercise power. In 1750 the New London East and New London West Associations declared that the Saybrook Platform was not binding upon any church. This attitude was simply a reflection of the attitude of the local churches. Most churches worked on the assumption that the Platform was not binding unless the church itself adopted the Platform. Usually, each church modified the Saybrook Platform to suit local conditions. For example, the Farmington First Church dropped the seventh article because, the congregation felt, it gave too much power to the pastor. Norwich First, Records, I, 45; Farmington First, Records, III, Misc. Papers, #2.

this time were moving toward a more centralized ecclesiastical system. Centrist forces had always existed within Congregationalism, and had already produced the Cambridge Platform. According to Williston Walker it was these forces that would have created a Saybrook Platform in Massachusetts if the royal governor had not been able to interfere.[42]

"Stoddardism" is nearly always equated with the open communion, and I will consider it on that basis alone, although I believe that it now becomes an "ism" its author would not have approved. If we wish to test the standard thesis that Stoddardism swept through Connecticut until Jonathan Edwards brought about a reaction, we need only look at the terms of communion in force in the Connecticut churches up to 1740, and especially any changes that took place in these requirements from 1677, the date Stoddard began to admit the unregenerate to full communion.

From its founding to the last day of the year 1739, the colony of Connecticut had authorized the establishment of about 117 churches.[43] Of these the records of forty-three have disappeared. Of the remaining seventy-four, it is impossible to do anything more than guess at the

[42]Williston Walker, "Why Did Not Massachusetts Have a Saybrook Platform?" Yale Review, I (May, 1892), 68-86.

[43]List of Congregational Ecclesiastical Societies Established in Connecticut before October, 1818 (Connecticut Historical Society, 1913).

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requirements for Communion prescribed by twenty-one of these churches. So, from an original 117 churches, there are left fifty-three, about which one can speak with some certainty. The following analysis is based solely upon this small sample.

The clearest fact that emerges from a study of these churches is that the open Communion was not yet in Connecticut, by 1740, the predominant, nor even perhaps the majority practice.

At best, twenty-seven churches were Stoddardean, while at least nineteen were most definitely pure churches, in practice as well as profession.[44] Many of these latter churches explicitly rejected Stoddardean ideas. But these figures give only the greatest possible margin the Stoddardean communion could have enjoyed. A more likely accounting would indicate about twenty-one Stoddardean churches and twenty-six pure churches.[45] Since Stoddard felt that only the minister should have the power to admit or reject new members, I have listed a church as Stoddardean where a private examination replaced the necessity of a public

[44] For the Stoddardean churches before 1740, see Appendix I, numbers 2-23, and Appendix II, numbers 3, 4, 17, 25, 31, 49. These last six churches later became pure churches.
For the pure churches before 1740, see Appendix II, numbers 5, 7, 9, 13-16, 24, 26-27, 31, 37, 41, 43, 45, 48, 56. See also Appendix I, number 19.

[45] To the above pure churches, add Appendix II, numbers 11, 18, 19, 21, 22, 38, 52.

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profession. It is obvious, however, that in some of the churches where a private examination took place, many members of the congregation believed that the minister was examining "experience". It is interesting to note that even in those churches where the minister examined the applicant privately, the tradition of admission by vote of the congregation was usually retained to a slight degree by allowing the congregation to object to any applicant "propounded" by the minister. In effect, the congregation cast a vote of silence for each admission.

Many of the Stoddardean churches practiced the Half-Way Covenant, which was incompatible with Stoddard's ideas, and which he rejected. Whereas Stoddard became increasingly unsympathetic to those who kept away from the Lord's Supper for whatever reason, most of the "Stoddardean" churches in Appendix I made special arrangements for the scrupulous non-communicant. They were to be "pitied, assisted and quickened" until they saw fit to come to the Table.

In listing churches as pure, I have looked for evidence that would strongly indicate that the church expected its members to be converted. A church is pure only if an unconverted person, even of good character, may not join the church in full communion.

The appendices clearly show that Stoddardism, even in a compromised form, was at best holding its own in Connecticut. It is true that there seems to have been a tendency for the

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newer churches to adopt a Stoddardean communion, but the difference was very close. Of the twenty churches established after 1700, eleven have been listed as Stoddardean, and nine as pure. Even if we break these figures into decades, there appears no trend toward one practice or the other.

There is one odd fact, which, if it tells anything, tells against a strong Stoddardean influence. Of the thirty-three churches listed in the appendices, it appears that only two changed their original requirements for communion, in order to adopt a more Stoddardean model. Unless this lack of change is simply the result of lacunae in the records, which seems improbable for those records I have been discussing, one must conclude that the original covenant and confession of faith acquired a sacrosanct character with time, and was not easily revised.[46] Indeed, some of the covenants at this time proclaim their eternal validity.

If we consider the churches founded before 1677, that is, before the admission of the unconverted to full membership had found its greatest champion, we may guess that nearly all of those churches expected a profession of

[46] [Samuel Hopkins], The Life and Character of Mr. Jonathan Edwards (London, 1785), pp. 72-73. Hopkins pointed out that very few churches had altered their covenants in order to adopt the Stoddardean communion. Hopkins felt, however, that Stoddardism was beginning to prevail in practice in the 1760's in New England.

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experience, and stated such a prerequisite in the original covenant, at least by implication. In order to become Stoddardean, these churches would have to modify either the covenant, or Stoddardism. It has been shown that Stoddardism was modified, and it seems probable that the covenant was untouched. But how many of these older churches had covenants which were never reconciled to Stoddardism? It is precisely these older churches whose records are lost, or whose covenants are silent on the precise terms of admission.

Whatever may have been the strength of Stoddardism, it is obvious that there was always strong opposition to the practice. The various laments that religion was being undermined from Northampton may indicate that Stoddard's influence was indeed predominant in Connecticut, or they may indicate that Americans have a tradition of hysteria in the face of subversion. What is clear, is that many people regarded Stoddardism as a perversion of the "New England Way". Many of the churches formed after the Stoddard-Mather controversy had become public, specifically rejected Stoddardism in their covenants. Thus, the covenant of the Columbia (Lebanon Crank) parish, organized in 1722: "It is our minds that if person [sic.] be in an unconverted Estate and are Con[vinced] of it unto th[em]Selves that they are not to be Admitted unto Church Fellowship." North Woodstock, organized in 1727, rejected Stoddard's ideas explicitly, and

then copied into their covenant Paul's warning, that "whosoever eats and drinks unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . ." Many churches adopted phrases like: "We do (we hope) in some Measure of heart Sincerity" agree to observe all the ordinances of the Gospel; or, more usual: "We believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths." The point being made by these phrases was that the communicant was professing real sainthood, not infallible, of course, but at least in-so-far as he or the other "saints" could judge.

Of those churches, then, of which we have been speaking, perhaps one-half required some evidence of a conversion experience.

It should not be thought, however, that Connecticut was divided into two camps on the communion issue: easy versus strict. The fact is, that those churches I have called pure church would be better designated as "Matherian", and, as has been pointed out above, the Mathers did not favor a strict admissions policy.

The best example of "Matherian" influence is in the practice of allowing the congregation to decide whether the candidate is a "real" saint, even if the candidate himself is unsure of his state. Take for example the Brooklyn First Church: This church is clearly pure church, but it was willing to admit to full communion all those "orthodox in faith, free from Scandal, and able to examine themselves

and discern the Lord's Body; as also to rest Satisfied with Such Admittance of Adult Persons into this Church as is performed either by making a Confession of Faith and Relation of the Work of Grace on their Hearts, or Producing Testimonies of their Reputed Piety, or who do charitably discover the same by Religious and Exemplary Conversations."[47]

Each phrase covers a different case, and only the last is relevant here. Increase Mather had argued that some persons were too scrupulous to ever declare themselves saved, but that their sanctity could be discerned by other sanctified persons (in a rough way, of course) and that such persons could be made full members of the church, and required to attend the Table, even if they felt unworthy.[48]

In actual practice, there could have been very little difference between a Stoddardean and a Matherian church, since most people, probably, had no great assurance one way or the other about their spiritual state. If anyone did feel himself hopelessly damned, and was sure at every moment that he was unregenerate, then he could not enter the Matherian type of church. If his despair was fitful, and he was of good character, he would probably get into any church he wanted, since everyone knew that one of Satan's most

[47]Brooklyn First, Records, I, 2-4, MSS, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

[48]Increase Mather, The Strange Doctrine Examined and Confuted.

potent temptations was that of despair. Every saint could expect a few bad moments.

Unless the congregation could sniff sanctity, they must have judged outward actions, which, again, means that any upright person could have joined most of the churches in Connecticut. Actually, from the records of censures, excommunications, exhortations, etc., it appears that many a disreputable person was able to join the communion--at least between pregnancies and hang-overs.

To speak then of Stoddardism rushing down the valley, and opening the doors of the churches to the eager masses, is ridiculous. Stoddardism made its progress in Connecticut, not by sweeping away old traditions, but by running with them. It was becoming easier and easier to become a full member of a congregational church in Connecticut, and would have continued to do so had Stoddard sailed to England in 1669.

Stoddard's real importance, insofar as the pure church is concerned, is that he dared to attack the <u>idea</u> of the pure church, for the salient fact of Connecticut's history from 1700 to 1740 is that men retained the ideal of a pure church even as they violated that ideal in practice. This may have been simple hypocrisy, the dead weight of tradition, or that paradoxical emotion described by Shakespeare:

"To love that well, which thou must leave ere long."[49]

Inevitably, someone decided to bridge the gap between what was professed and what was being done. Stoddard's challenge was unmistakable. New England had now to decide whether her ideals would change to meet the facts, or if the practice of admissions would be altered to conform with the pure church ideal. The Great Awakening settled the issue in favor of the pure church.

[49]Sonnet 73.

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Chapter III

THE GREAT AWAKENING: REVIVAL AND DECLINE

Although Connecticut experienced a series of revivals around 1735,[1] some of which bear comparison with the later revival, it is conventional to date the Great Awakening in Connecticut with George Whitefield's visit there late in 1740. Contemporaries, of course, saw the revivals of 1741 and 1742 as a new season of grace, and most historians have concentrated their attention on these years. Whatever the revivals connected with Whitefield's journey through the colony may owe to the earlier revivals is not at point here. It is more important to note that the period 1741-1742 clearly differed from earlier revivals in two ways: The Awakening was more general, and more intense, in 1741-1742, and there was a disastrous aftermath. Every other wave of enthusiasm had subsided gradually; the Awakening of 1741-1742 had completely vanished when the snow began to melt in 1743. It was as if a tidal wave should break and send forth less than a ripple. Remember the case of Jonathan Edwards, whose problems at Northampton came to a head in 1749, when, for the first time in six years, somebody

[1] For a general account of earlier revivals see: Mary Hewitt Mitchell, The Great Awakening and Other Revivals in the Religious Life of Connecticut (New Haven , 1934).

applied for admission to the church. This complete "deadness" in regard to religion was almost universal in Connecticut. The pure church ideology was tremendously affected by the fact that the Revival was cut off just at the point where so much more was expected of God's grace.

Contemporaries and historians were, naturally, most impressed by the intensity of the revival; by the great crowds that turned out to hear the revivalists, the extraordinary numbers of conversions, and the large additions to the churches. One minister, wishing to give his correspondent some notion of the magnitude of the revival in his church, compared the revival year with a normal year in terms of church admissions. "I have reason to think not a few have been in some late years savingly converted, & in greater Number than I ever knew in more than 4 times the Same Space."[2] This is as good a device as any to measure the intensity of the revival, and I have worked out "normal" years for various churches for purposes of comparison. In all cases, the normal year represents the average of at least five years of continuous admissions.

In many cases, the revivals of 1741-1742 were, indeed, spectacular. In North Stonington, for example, it had required nine years to bring in sixty-five communicants,

[2]Samuel Cooke to Thomas Foxcroft, 15 May, 1745, Letters to Thomas Foxcroft of Boston, MSS, Connecticut Historical Society.

while on one day in June, 1742 the church added 105 to its communion. The Church at Franklin, with a normal annual rate of 3.5, received 101 new members in the revival--the work of thirty years completed in two. Bolton received ten times its normal rate; New London First, with an average of 7.1, received eighty-one new members in 1741.[3] Woodbury First averaged 4.7 admissions over a period of twenty years, but added eighty-five in the two years of its revival. Lebanon First and Norwich First multiplied their average by seven.[4] Most churches probably received at least two to four years' growth in each year of the revival, as was the case with Fairfield, Preston First, Windham First, Stonington First, and Lebanon (Goshen).[5]

On the other hand, it is very difficult to find a church that did not experience an increase in the rate of admissions in 1741 or 1742. Having gone through

[3]North Stonington, Records, I, 7-9. Average based upon admissions from 1733 to 1741. Franklin (Norwich West Farms), Records, I, 25-37. Average based on 1720-1734. Bolton, Records, pp. 126-134. Average based on 1726-1734. New London First, Records, I, 15-22. Average based on 1720-1734.

[4]Woodbury First, Records, I, 27-128 (scattered). Average based on 1702-1725. Lebanon First, Records, I, 1-35. Average based on 1721-1734. Norwich First, Records, II, 205-220. Averaged based on 1719-1740.

[5]Fairfield (Greenfield Hill), Records, I, 6-12. Average based on 1727-1741. Preston First, Records, I, 6ff. Average based on 1701-1739. Windham First, Records, I, 6-8. Average based on 1726-1734. Stonington First, Records, II, 21-24. Average based on 1733-1740. Lebanon (Goshen), Records, I, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13. Average based on 1730-1735.

nearly all of the extant records I have come across only three such churches: Redding, Killingworth, and Branford.

Although not every church admission equals a conversion, and vice versa, it is incontestable that in the years 1741 and 1742 large numbers of people were seeking to join in full communion with the congregational churches in Connecticut, and that this situation was in marked contrast to the time before the Awakening, which became more and more, in memory, a period of "degeneracy." This great ingathering of souls into the Congregational churches has, of course, drawn the attention of numerous historians, many of whom look for the origin of the Awakening in social discontent, or in the ethos of the frontier. It seems doubtful, however, that the revival was aimed, insofar as the revivalists believed they were in control, at enlarging the church. They seem, rather, to have been interested in purifying the church. The Great Awakening was not intentionally democratic; it was an exclusivist movement. When Davenport went through the streets singing, "Come to Christ! Come to Christ!", he added, "Come Away! Come Away!"[6]

The Awakening in its boom period introduced into the New England religious scene of the mid-eighteenth century three novel features, all of which contributed to a

[6]I do not mean to imply here that Davenport was typical. There is a tendency, however, to equate religious excess with social or political radicalism in the Awakening.

heightened sense of the Church of Christ as a body of "true" saints. These were: 1-the prominence of men like Whitefield, Tennent, Davenport, and Edwards, who itinerated fairly extensively throughout New England, and who attracted large followings. Each of these men was clearly interested in a pure, rather than a large church. 2-an abundance of saints. During the Awakening the process of conversion seemed easier to discern since there were so many cases of vivid conversions. At the same time, ministers were receiving applications for admissions in greater numbers than ever before, and most of these candidates were willing, able, and, probably, anxious to relate their experience. 3-The Awakening was taken as an act of God with more than ordinary significance. Specifically, the Awakening strengthened those millenarian expectations that Alan Heimert believes characterized eighteenth century Puritanism.[7] A vivid belief in the imminence of the Last Day usually coincides with a desire to purify the church.

The four most important figures in the Revival were George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, James Davenport, and Jonathan Edwards. The first three travelled extensively, even beyond New England, and Edwards in 1740 had a more than colonial reputation. Of these four, Edwards and Davenport

[7]Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), pp. 59-95.

are most closely connected with events in Connecticut, but it should be noted that Whitefield and Tennent were also preaching a pure church doctrine.

In 1740 and 1741, Whitefield was acutely conscious of the doctrines of predestination and election, because he was defending them at that time against Wesley's heresy of "free Grace."[8] Furthermore, in January of 1740, Whitefield was engaged in attacking Archbishop Tillotson, and was required in this to stress the importance of "experimental religion". Whitefield said of Tillotson's writings that ". . .any spiritual Man that reads them may easily see that the Archbishop knew of no other than a bare historical Faith. . . ."[9] Whitefield also encouraged a form of incipient separation; he encouraged the formation of religious societies, which were private meetings for the sake of mutual exhortation, prayer and conversation of a pious character. These societies flourished during revival times and probably contributed to the momentum of such phenomena, and also to the later schisms. Whitefield believed that these societies should be formed from the elite, or regenerate members of the congregation. "As all Christians are in general, so all Members of Religious Societies in particular,

[8]Whitefield, Free Grace Indeed! A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley (London, 1741).

[9]Whitefield, Letter to a Friend in London, January 18, 1740 (Boston, 1740), p. 3.

are in an especial Manner, as Houses built upon an Hill. . . take Heed. . .that your Conversation, in common Life, be as becometh such an open & peculiar Profession of the Gospel of Christ."[10]

Finally, there is Jonathan Edwards' account of Whitefield's successful preaching. According to Edwards, "The Revival at first appeared chiefly among Professors, and those that had entertained the Hope that they were in a State of Grace, to whom Mr. Whitefield chiefly address'd himself. . . ."[11] Whitefield's sermons during this period do seem to have been more concerned with unsettling the complacent, than with calling the masses to communion.

The argument here is not that Whitefield was a Separatist, but that one outcome of his preaching was a "pure Church". It has been remarked of Whitefield's theology that it was "adaptable and inclusive",[12] and this applies with double force to his ecclesiology. He was, after all, an ordained minister of an episcopal church and had to get

[10]Whitefield, The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Societies (Boston, 1740), p. 23. On the potential for schism in these societies, see Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England (Boston, 1743), pp. 203-204. Even Joseph Bellamy was opposed to such groups. Hoz. Odell to Bellamy, 8 February, 1750, Bellamy Papers, MSS, Hartford Theological Seminary.

[11]Edwards to Thomas Prince, Jr., 12 December, 1743 in The Christian History (Boston, 1744), p. 367. Emphasis added.

[12]Gaustad, p. 28.

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along with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Whitefield, because of his constant itineracy, never faced the concrete problem of a "mixed communion." How he would have dealt with such a problem must remain in doubt, despite all his caveats against separations.

Gilbert Tennent had the least impact of the four great revivalists upon Connecticut. He toured the colony once, right after Whitefield and following pretty much the same route. He probably did no more than encourage what Whitefield had begun so well. But whatever his influence, it was again in the direction of a pure, rather than a large, church. Thomas Prince, Jr., the editor of The Christian History, believed that Tennent's effectiveness lay in his ability to expose the "many vain and secret shifts and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes" of the professed saints. Prince also recounts that, when his church enjoyed a revival in 1741, gaining sixty communicants, ". . .the greater part of whom gave a more exact account of the work of the Spirit of God on their souls. . .", Tennent advised him to discourage others, "who, had they the like experience a year before, I doubt not would have offered themselves, and we should have as readily received them. . . ." Prince found it regrettable that Tennent was "so exceeding strict" about admissions.[13]

[13]The Christian History, pp. 114-120.

It may be objected that Davenport represents the lunatic fringe of the Awakening, but even so, his influence was a strong one in Connecticut.[14] Davenport was Connecticut born, of a distinguished family, graduated from Yale, and, by grace of five half-sisters, enjoyed a "Davenport connection" among the Connecticut clergy. Davenport was related through his half-sisters to Eleazar Wheelock, William Gaylord of Wilton, Timothy Allen of West Haven, and Jonathan Merrick of Branford. Wheelock and Allen were especially close to Davenport, the latter encouraging him in his more bizarre practices, and the former helping him to eventually recant his more egregious errors. Davenport's parish at Southold, Long Island had once been within the colony of Connecticut, and Davenport made journeys through Connecticut in 1740, 1741, 1742, and 1743, and each time attracted large crowds.

It is not necessary to go to any length to prove Davenport's exclusiveness, so far as church membership was concerned. One of his first acts, after being inspired by the Holy Spirit, was to divide his congregation into "brethren" and "neighbors".[15] The sole criterion for

[14]Chauncy's Seasonable Thoughts is filled with information about, or one might say against Davenport. The only biography is Robert W. Brockway, "The Significance of James Davenport in the Great Awakening" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1951).

[15]Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts, p. 190.

judgment seems to have been Davenport's ability to recognize sanctity. One of the deacons of the church was found wanting and became a "neighbor", and was therefore barred from the Lord's Supper. Davenport, in his famous recantation, never denied the necessity, and possibility, of a pure church.

With Jonathan Edwards, the problem is more complex and more important. Davenport was a Separatist through and through, but Edwards was not. Although the pure church in Connecticut was most loudly proclaimed by the thirty or so Separatist churches, there were many pure churches among the churches of the "Standing Order", and for these churches, Jonathan Edwards was the greatest of the prophets.

When Edwards became colleague pastor to Stoddard in 1727, he was, naturally, subordinate to his grandfather and agreed with him in his mode of admissions. Although Edwards continued the Stoddardean system after his grandfather's death in 1729, he says he did so "despite some difficulties in my view, which I could never solve." It was only "a distrust of my own understanding, and deference to the authority of so venerable a man, the seeming strength of some of his arguments, together with the success he had in his ministry, and his great reputation and influence" that "prevailed for a long time to bear down my scruples."[16]

[16]Jonathan Edwards, Works (New York, 1849), I, 86. All references to Edwards' works will refer to this edition.

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It must be noted that when Edwards wrote this, in 1749, he was already facing dismissal from Northampton, and that the principal charge against him was his inconsistency. Above all, Edwards had to demonstrate a certain mental stability, and much of his consistency may have been created in retrospect. For example, Edwards argued that he "was of the same mind concerning the qualifications of communicants at the Lord's Table, [c. 1742-1746 when he was writing his Treatise on Religious Affections] that I am of now."[17] One cannot doubt that Edwards honestly thought that he had given certain "intimations" of his doubts in regard to Stoddardism in these books, but they are hints well disguised from the average reader.[18]

Having claimed intellectual consistency, Edwards was more than ever open to attack on his timing. Biographies of Edwards assert over and over that Edwards knew that publication of his doctrine would result in his dismissal, but that his duty to God overrode such considerations. Nobody

[17]Edwards, Works, I, 87.

[18]In his Journal, Edwards wrote, after his dismissal, that, "I. . .designedly gave some intimations of my notions of Visible Christians, in my work on Religious Affections . . . ." Sereno Dwight, The Life of President Edwards (New York, 1830), p. 313. Dwight feels that Edwards "divulged his sentiments. . .clearly" in that work, but, as John E. Smith, editor of the Religious Affections in the Yale series, points out, "Edwards does not enter the controversy in which Stoddard was involved, and no passages used by him in the Affections are intended to raise the communion issue." Smith, editor, Treatise on Religious Affections (New Haven, 1959), p. 60.

has ever explained why Edwards waited until 1748 to close the communion to the unregenerate. Whatever doubts he may have had in 1729 were resolved, according to Edwards, before December 1748, and he had, he later claimed, even made known his rejection of unregenerate communion to several persons before December, 1748.[19] He would have told the local potentate, Colonel John Stoddard if a practical test came up, but unfortunately for Edwards, Stoddard died in June, 1748. Unfortunately for history, the persons in Edwards' confidence have never been identified.

Edwards' main line of defense was that, "I have been brought to this necessity in Divine Providence, by such a situation of affairs, and coincidence of circumstances and events, as I choose at present to be silent about; and which it is not needful, nor perhaps expedient, for me to publish to the world."[20] Edwards believed that there was a kairos in the affairs of men, which taken at its full, need not be explained.[21]

[19]Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 305 footnote.

[20]Edwards, Works, I, 86.

[21]In the following discussion I will omit any mention of what may have been an important factor in Edwards' decision to close the Table, that is, his disgust at the lax discipline of the Northampton church. Edwards constantly complained about this, and attributed it to the last years of Stoddard's ministry, when the old man was necessarily less active, and somewhat deaf. Edwards immediately lost the right to an absolute veto when he became pastor in 1729; he was discontent with the society's control over his salary

The question, however, remains. Granting that Edwards had misgivings even as early as 1739 about unregenerate communion, we must inquire into those forces that turned doubt into conviction. Edwards reacted to the Great Awakening in much the same fashion, and for the same reasons, as the Separates. Like them he felt that the main task before the New England ministers was to unsettle the complacency of the saints. He was drawn naturally toward two subjects, both of which were a sort of threshold to the pure church. Edwards became especially interested in the Biblical prophecies of the Latter Days, and he began his remarkable examination of the conversion process.

Edwards was obviously excited by millennial expectations during the revival years.[22] In his Distinguishing

and fought for a permanent salary. Finally, Edwards suffered a loss of face in the famous "dirty books" episode. After his dismissal, he wrote to a friend in Scotland that "I have long been perfectly out of conceit of our unsettled, independent, confused way of church government in this land; and the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the word of God. . . ." Quoted in Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 412.

[22]Edwards had delivered a series of sermons in 1739, before the Great Awakening, but after the revivals in his own parish, later published as his History of the Work of Redemption. Edwards tried to grasp the unity of all history, and in so doing, concentrated upon the end of history--the Second Coming. Thus, these 1739 sermons were strongly millennarian, and in that sense, optimistic. The Awakening of 1741 must have seemed a vindication of his theories. Perry Miller describes some of the unique features of Edwards' ideas on the Millennium in "The End of the World," Errand into the Wilderness (New York, 1956).

Marks of a Work of the Spirit, (1741), Edwards spoke of "the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of Christ's church on earth." So imminent was Christ's victory over the world, Edwards stated, that the chosen people would not need, and therefore should not expect, those miraculous powers bestowed upon the apostles in order to preserve the church in her trials.[23] In his Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, (1742), Edwards reasoned that "it is not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least, a prelude of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in the Scripture, which in the progress and issue of it shall renew the world of mankind. . . .we cannot reasonably think otherwise, than that the beginning of this great work of God must be near. And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America."[24]

Because of statements like these, Edwards was understood by some of his audience, to have proclaimed that the "Latter Days" had, in fact, already begun. When the revival was dead, and Edwards attacked for a false prophet, he rejected only the claim that he had predicted the actual arrival of the Millennium; he retained his belief that the end

[23]Edwards, Works, I, 558.

[24]Edwards, Works, III, 313.

was coming, and coming soon.[25]

During the flood time of the revival, such hopes for the Latter Days ran high among those who were champions of the pure church. Davenport began his erratic career after meeting Jonathan Barber, who was obsessed with the approach of the destruction of the physical universe. This became one of the themes of Davenport's theology.[26] Joseph Bellamy, who was Edwards' greatest disciple in Connecticut, is said to have thought "that the millennium was coming any minute" during the flush times of conversion.[27] Edwards' father, Timothy, a minister in Connecticut, compared the year 1741 with "those latter days, wherein we may be especially warranted to expect that things will be accomplished, concerning which it will be said, 'Who hath heard such a Thing? Who hath seen such things?'"[28]

The success of the Great Awakening also introduced for the first time in eighteenth century New England an abundance of vivid conversions. Where once pastors had to encourage those who had a "hope" of conversion to apply for communion, there were now three or four who could detail

[25]Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 213.

[26]Brockway, pp. 35-36.

[27]Sherrod Soule, "The Overflow of Two Hundred Years," in Commemorative Exercises of the First Congregational Church in Cheshire, Connecticut ([Hartford, 1925]), p. 66.

[28]Edwards, Works, III, 286.

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the work of the Spirit and who could hardly be shut up.

The Awakening was later attacked because of its wilder manifestations, especially in this area of assurance. The great problem for the congregational churches had been to devise a method of discerning sainthood. The pure church must rest upon the ability to distinguish sanctity. Stoddard's strongest argument for unregenerate communion (aside from Scripture) was the practical impossibility of determining who was or was not a saint. As has been pointed out above, those churches which were technically pure, had more or less evaded the problem by giving applicants a large benefit of doubt.

The problem was further complicated because there should be ideally a double assurance of sanctity. The saint should be subjectively sure of his conversion, and the congregation of fellow saints should be somehow able to discern the applicant's sainthood. One gets the impression that a strong subjective feeling on the part of the candidate, so long as it avoided expression in an unpopular way, would be sufficient to gain full admission. In other words, the subjective assurance was probably more desired than objective certainty, the more so since every congregation had the right to excommunicate. This would explain Stoddard's emphasis upon the uncertainty of subjective assurance.[29]

[29]Not, however, its impossibility. It was as yet too difficult for anyone in New England to doubt that a saint would not receive some sort of inner assurance from God.

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It explains also Davenport's contrary view that saints knew themselves to be so beyond a doubt.

Davenport developed the possibility of assurance, both subjective and objective, to its final absurdity. As mentioned above, admission to full communion in Southold depended solely upon Davenport's ability to sniff sanctity. In his itineracies, Davenport encouraged his audience to act for themselves as he did at Southold. Such a doctrine was obviously full of comfort. It enabled the Strict Congregational Church of North Stonington, for example, to declare that, "We believe that we are of that number who are Elected of God to Eternall Life and that Christ Did Live on Earth Dye and Rise again for us. . . ."[30] Or poor Hannah Watts could write to her pastor, "O wonderfull wonderfull I must tell you how my redemption looks to me methinks I see that blessed redeemer when he had brought up all the rest of the elect out of hell he missed one he could not rest no but down go[es] again and scrapes the very bottom and hottest place in all hell to bring up this hell monster [Hannah herself!]. . . ."[31]

But how little charity have the scrapings for those left behind! Assurance of one's own salvation was often

[30]North Stonington, Strict Congregational Church, Documents, #5.

[31]Canterbury, Strict Congregational Church, Papers, #40.

complemented by assurance of another's damnation. This "uncharitable" behavior toward the unregenerate became the most persistent flaw in the Awakening, and was attacked even by "New Lights." Schisms; trances in which one saw his name recorded in the Book of Life, and his Pastor's in the inventory of Hell; a fifteen year old girl telling her parents that they were no better than devils; a bonfire of books whose authors were certainly in Hell (including Increase Mather); all were based upon a solely subjective criterion of salvation.[32] Davenport had solved the problem of identifying saints, but the inconvenience of his answer was obvious.

Although Edwards rejected visions, or voices, as signs of conversion, and even though he recognized the difficulty in discerning grace, he was convinced that it was possible to distinguish between regenerate and natural men. John Smith, editor of the Yale edition of the Treatise on Religious Affections points out that Edwards' "theory of signs or criteria went considerably beyond what some of his contemporaries believed possible in the discerning of spirits. . . ."[33] Edwards was clearly travelling in a similar direction as Davenport, but by indirect and crooked ways.

[32]Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts, passim.

[33]Introduction, p. 23.

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Edwards became especially interested in the problem of discerning piety during the Awakening. His two most important works of the subject--The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit and the Treatise on Religious Affections --were composed during the period 1742-1743, and were stimulated by Edwards' defense of the revival in his Thoughts on the Revival of Religion.

Edwards made it abundantly clear that mere morality, the simple avoidance of sin, was of no virtue. The morality of the "natural man" was hypocrisy. According to Edwards, there must be a new ability to love on the part of the saint. If a man were unregenerate, he could "love" God only because God might save him; as a saint, one loves God for His excellence. So also, in everyday life, a saint would witness disinterested love. As Edwards complained, "Tho' there have been very few Instances among Professors amongst of us, of what is ordinarily called Scandalous Sin, known to me; yet the Temper that some of them Shew, and the Behaviour they have been of, together with some things in the Kind and Circumstances of their Experiences, make me much afraid least there be a considerable Number that have wofully deceived themselves."[34]

It was the "Temper" that counted as much, or even more than act. "If the acts of obedience [to God's laws]

[34] The Christian History, p. 380.

be looked upon, not as mere notions of the body [and therefore without merit], but as acts of the soul; the whole exercise of the Spirit of the mind, in the action, must be taken in, with the end acted for, and the respect the Soul then has to God, etc. . . ."[35]

Since real religion is therefore an inner, personal experience, Edwards denied in 1743 the ability of a congregation to determine with final certainty who was, or was not, a saint. However, Edwards had already accepted key elements of the pure church doctrine. Like every other minister, Edwards believed that conversion must take place in a certain sequence. The soul must pass through its dark night of conviction, before the dawn of joy. There were problems connected with the process--the Devil might send false terrors, for example--but for anyone who had experienced a true conversion himself, and who was experienced in dealing with both true and false conversions in others, there was some likelihood of objective knowledge in judging the validity of any particular conversion. Edwards, of course, was such a person, and he was indeed judging his townsmen when he expressed doubt as to "some things in the Kind and Circumstances of their Experiences. . . ."

In the incident which led to his public repudiation of unregenerate communion, Edwards denied admission to a

[35]Edwards, Works, III, 204.

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man who refused to recount his experience. This refusal was based upon principle, and not upon inability--or so the candidate for admission claimed.[36] This point is of the utmost importance, because the candidate did claim a subjective assurance, and would have been admitted to many churches as "hopefully" regenerate on the basis of his own self-knowledge. Edwards was demanding objective, as well as subjective, assurance. For such assurance, there must obviously be some sort of examination.

Edwards beclouded the issue somewhat in his Farewell Sermon in which he published the texts of two short professions that he would have accepted for admissions. Both of these professions are innocuous; one of them does not even mention the covenant of grace, and both express only a "hope" of conversion.[37] To have fired their pastor for his request that communicants make such a simple profession of faith--one biographer compares them to the confirmational vows in the Anglican church--seems entirely unreasonable of the Northampton church.[38] That was the very point of Edwards' last official address to his people.

These short professions, however, were not Edwards' ideal formulation, but only what he would have accepted as

[36]Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 314.

[37]Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 629.

[38]Alexander V. G. Allen, Jonathan Edwards (New York, 1890), p. 264.

a compromise. Had Edwards won full victory at Northampton, he would have had applicants for admission come to his study and give a spontaneous account of their conversion. Edwards would have then judged that conversion. He described the function of the minister in this regard as follows:[39]

> "And though the pastor is not to act as a searcher of the heart, or a lord of conscience in this affair, yet that hinders not but that he may and ought to inquire particularly into the experiences of the souls committed to his care and charge, and he may be under the best advantage to instruct and advise them. . . ."

This was the procedure that Edwards attempted to initiate at Northampton, and which he actually did practice while the church was in an uproar against him. Shortly after announcing his rejection of unregenerate communion, Edwards was visited by a parishioner, Mary Hulbert, who related her experiences in private to him. Edwards was convinced of her regeneration and proposed to admit her to the Communion. Mary herself advised against this because she feared it would increase the "commotion" in the church. She was right, of course, and her admission was blocked by a vote of 12 to 3 in the Standing Committee of the church. Edwards continued to struggle for her admission, and found that more and more persons were coming to profess privately to him--and this after a period of six years in which the

[39]Edwards, Works, I, 183.

Communion was open to all, and in which not one person in Northampton joined the church.[40] Edwards was no doubt encouraged that in insisting upon quality, he began to enjoy quantity. That the affair would end in his being dismissed, Edwards did not foresee.[41]

Edwards' defense of his actions in 1749 was ultimately based upon the pure church doctrine of the ability of the saints to know one another, with at least a high degree of accuracy. In his Humble Inquiry, Edwards described the "visible church of Christ" as a "society having its several members united by the bond of Christian brotherly love. . . ."[42] He went on to make the obvious point that only saints have this sort of love for one another. His final elaboration of this thought came in The Nature of True Virtue where he claims that "When any one under the influence of general benevolence, sees another Being possessed of the like general benevolence, this attaches his heart to him, and draws forth greater love to him. . . ."[43] Edwards believed it to be logically unquestionable that "if any Being is possessed of such a temper, he will unavoidably

[40]Dwight, Life of Edwards, p. 317.

[41]Edwards was finally reduced to playing, and pleading, for time in order to make suitable arrangements for another pulpit. Dwight, Life of Edwards, pp. 322-349.

[42]Edwards, Works, I, 142. Emphasis his.

[43]Edwards, Works, II, 265.

be pleased with the same temper in another. And it may in like manner be demonstrated, that it is such a spirit, and nothing else, which will relish such a spirit."[44] Edwards was saying that the saints felt a mystic bond of love for one another, from which the unregenerate were excluded. He now stood upon ground similar to Davenport, even though with less noise and greater charity.

For Jonathan Edwards, then, as for the other leaders of the Awakening, the paramount purpose of the revival was the purification of the churches, and the success of the Awakening further encouraged pure church ideals. Even if the results of the Awakening were democratic, or inclusive rather than exclusive, this argument need not be invalid.

In fact, however, it is merely supposititious to say that the Awakening saw the masses enter the church. According to Gaustad, on admittedly slim evidence, it does not seem that the Awakening went much beyond those already in the church, and that most conversions took place among the Half-Way members.[45] Contemporaries sometimes distinguished between the earlier revivals and the Great Awakening on the

[44]Edwards, Works, II, 266. Notice it is the "Temper" one recognizes, not overt behavior.

[45]Gaustad, The Great Awakening, pp. 103-104.

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grounds that former periods had brought in persons concerned with joining the church in full communion, while in 1741, the characteristic response was a shattering of the saints' assurance.[46]

The abrupt ending of the Awakening in no way lessened those factors which had encouraged the pure church dream, but rather encouraged the emergence of that ideal into practice.[47] This was manifested most clearly in the organization of Separatist or Strict Congregational churches following the collapse of the revival.

In 1743 it was of the utmost significance that the

[46]This observation was made by Reverend Thomas Prince, Jr. in the 11 June, 1743 issue of The Christian History, p. 114. Comparing the revival of 1727 with the Great Awakening, Prince judged the later revival as purer because in the earlier revival "those who came to me. . . . [came not] so much with the inquiry, What shall we do to be saved, as to signify they had a sense of their duty to come to the Lord's Table, that they durst not stay away any longer." If Prince's observation be generally true of New England, we see here the contrast between earlier, Stoddardean, revivals, in which the message was that everyone had a duty to worship God, with later, say Edwardian, revivals, in which the message was that the sheep and goats have already been divided, and the sinner can do nothing to save himself.

[47]Chiliastic theories, for example, are notoriously capable of fattening on bad news. Edwards, writing in 1744, admitted that the "present state of things in New England is . . .very melancholy" but he retained his conviction that "the late wonderful revivals of Religion are forerunners of those glorious times so often prophesied of in the Scriptures, and that this was the first dawning of that light, and beginning of that work, which. . .would at last bring on the Church's latter day glory." After his dismissal, Edwards wrote to a friend in Scotland that "those very things you take notice of in Isa. 59 are approaching." Dwight, Life of Edwards, pp. 213, 416.

revival had ended, and ended with an abruptness that was, and is, difficult to explain. The churches which had so flourished for two years became aware by 1743 that the wave of conversions was spent. Each succeeding year brought in fresh evidence that the revival was to be followed by a "deadness" in religion that lasted the rest of the century. The rapid decline of the Awakening needs no proof, but is represented in the following chart of fourteen churches, selected from many others only because their records were easiest to use.[48]

[48] MSS records of all the following are at the Connecticut State Library.

Admissions to Full Communion

Church	1741--1742		1743	Average annual admissions 1744--1750
Fairfield (Greenfield)	4	18	3	3.1
Woodbury First	45	40	8	4.3
Bozrah	22	13	2	1.3
Hampton First	c.47	65	5	c. 5.0
New London First	81	13	4	2.3
North Stonington	7	130	4	0 [49]
Preston First	13	2	0	0.7
Windham First	69	31	14	4.0
Killingworth	12	10	4	2.1
Norwich First	32	44	15	2.1
Franklin	68	33	5	1.0
Colchester First	28	37	5	0.7
Mansfield First	31	20	0	8.7

The abrupt collapse of the revival insured the outbreak of pure church separations. Nearly everybody in Connecticut had welcomed the Awakening. Even those who are today called "Old Lights" conceived their opposition as not to the revival itself, but to those impurities which threatened it. Unfortunately, what was impure to one man was essential to another. Many ministers of the established

[49] North Stonington's next admission to full communion came in 1752.

order were blamed by their parishioners for having opposed the revival in toto. At Scotland the church suffered a schism because some of the people there felt that the minister and most of the regular church members "Exclaim against the present work of God in this Land, and call it the work of the Devil or Enthusiasm, thus in General they Reject the present work which we receive to be the work of Gods Spirit. . . ."[50] The Separatists eventually adopted a stock phrase in this regard. Where the revival had ceased because of the interference of the regular church, the Separatists charged such a church with having "a form of Godliness, and not the power." That this charge was convincing to the Separatists is indicated by the fact that it half-convinced the regular clergy.[51]

These separations should not be regarded as bastard brats of the Awakening. They were, on the contrary, its most legitimate offspring. Just as the Awakening affected most strongly the young, so also it seems that Separatism was a movement of the young and recent convert. To give

[50]Scotland (Brunswick), Strict Congregational Church, Records, p. 2.

[51]See, for example, the Letter of the Windham County Association (Boston, 1745), pp. 4Off.. The Association admitted that "the Holy Spirit. . .has in a great measure, but righteously, withdrawn his converting and quickening Influences." The Association denied that this was a divine judgement on the established clergy, but was unable to suggest a reason for God's anger.

just a few examples, the Separatist Church in New London was organized by five men, "all of them fruits of the Great Awakening" according to a competent local historian.[52] Of the six men and women who created the Preston Separate Church, three were admitted to full communion between 1735 and 1739.[53] Another had been baptized as an adult in 1726, and experienced a conversion between 1744 and 1747. The pastor of this church was eighteen years old at his conversion, and twenty-six at his ordination. In a simple spot check of various Separatists, I found that six of six in the Scotland Separate Church had been admitted to full communion in the regular church in 1741-1745;[54] of ten Separates from the Brooklyn church, all were admitted to communion after 1736, and eight had been admitted during the Great Awakening;[55] of six Separates from New Milford, four were communicants only after 1734,[56] and of thirteen

[52]S. Leroy Blake, The Later History of the First Church of Christ, New London, Connecticut (New London, 1900), p. 121.

[53]These records are printed in: Bicentennial Celebration of the First Congregational Church of Preston, Connecticut, 1698-1898 (no place, 1900). The names of the original Separatists can be found in an article in this work: Amos A. Browning, "The Preston Separate Church."

[54]Scotland (Brunswick), Strict Congregational Church, Records, passim.

[55]Brooklyn First, Records, passim.

[56]New Milford, Records, passim.

Separates from Preston First church, eight had been admitted to full communion during the decade of the thirties.[57] Separatism and the Awakening were the business of the young.

It was the falling off of conversions that led to pure church schisms. It is significant that very few separations took place until after 1742, until after the numbers seeking admission had seriously dwindled.[58] The institutional history of the Strict Congregational churches began in October, 1745 at Mansfield, where only twelve persons in the three years following the revival had applied for admission to the church.

The dynamics behind the pure church schisms lay in that Puritan compulsion to seek out one's own failing as the final reason for God's anger.[59] Those who favored a pure church in theory discovered after the Awakening that

[57]Preston First, Records, passim.

[58]C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven, 1962), pp. 302-309 has a convenient list of sixty-three schisms in Connecticut, from 1729 to 1785. Of all sixty-three separations, Goen shows only seven before 1743. Actually, Goen includes schisms not motivated by a desire for a pure church, and sometimes even lists legally established societies as schismatic. Discounting for such churches, I find only three pure church separations before 1743. Undoubtedly, there was a great deal of ferment within the churches during the boom years of the revival, and perhaps schisms of the pure church type were inevitable, but it was certainly the decline of the Awakening that caused the separations, and not vice versa, as Eugene E. White argues in his "Decline of the Great Awakening in New England," New England Quarterly, XXXIV (1951), 35-52.

[59]Mansfield First, Records, volume "A", 6-26.

they had been greatly at fault in compromising that ideal; they had been too charitable. The best example of this attitude was the expression of regret by Elisha Paine "that he had not done his Duty in Time past in promoting Separations and Divisions among the People, and that for Time to come he should endeavour to promote and encourage Separations" especially where the unregenerate were allowed to receive the Bread and Wine.[60] So also Joseph Bellamy wrote that while "many were seemingly converted" in 1740 and 1741 in his parish, "There were false comforts & experiences among the rest which laid a foundation. . .for false religion to rise & prevail. . . ." Bellamy specifically meant that not enough care had been taken to examine candidates for communion, and his solution was to discontinue the practice of the Half-Way Covenant and unregenerate communion in his church.[61] Edwards also shared what must have been a general feeling among Separatists that God abhorred a "mixed" communion.[62] This, I believe, was the initial impetus for the wave of schisms that followed the drop in the number of conversions.

That the Strict Congregational churches were first and foremost attempts at realizing a pure church is beyond

[60] Letter of the Windham County Association, p. 9.

[61] Bethlehem, Records, I, 87-89.

[62] Edwards, Works, 189-191.

doubt. The Separatists were motivated by a strong desire to sunder all possible connection with "The World." Elisha Paine, one of the most important Separatist leaders, explained that "tho' Christ's children must live in this World, among worldly Men, yet they are not to join with them in Ways, etc.."[63] The Canterbury Separatist church rejoiced that Christ had called "the Chh. out of the world."[64]

The Separates were convinced of their regenerate state and attacked the idea that assurance can never be certain--which idea led inevitably to a Stoddardean communion. Abigail Smith separated from the First Church of Brooklyn "because the Pastor Preach'd that Some might be the Children of God & not know it, and that Assurance was not so necessary in these Days. . . ."[65] Dia Hide [Jedidia Hyde?] complained that "some would say Christians could not know Christians, but they could & they knew things as well or had as much sagacity as the people of old. . . ." Nathaniel Lothrop of Norwich became somewhat pugnacious about his assurance when he pounded his chest and challenged "all opposers [of God?] to say that I have not got the Spirit of

[63] Letter of the Windham County Association, p. 10.

[64] Canterbury, Strict Congregational Church, Papers, I, #32.

[65] Brooklyn First, Records, I, 60.

God in me for I know that I have. . . ."[66] The Separate church of North Stonington actually declared that, "all doubting in a believer is Sinfull. . . ."[67]

Fortunately for the historian, those who separated were called upon individually to explain why they were no longer attending services. Many of the responses were copied into the church records; most of the answers preserve a highly individualistic tone. Perhaps the best was Edmond Hewit's: "My God Commanded me to go from you & I know it, and that is all my Reason." Happily, most Separatists were not so terse. Hewit's wife, for example, explained that, among other reasons, "There are Such in the Chh. that I cant joyn with."[68]

Over and over, the Separates justified their action as a rejection of the iniquitous practice of a mixed communion. Jedidia Hide's first reason for separating was, "the Church not making regeneration the only term of communion." William Lothrop and John Fuller, who was the separatist minister at Norwich, made the same complaint.[69] In North Stonington, the Deacon William Wilcox separated

[66]Norwich First, Records, I, 36, 41.

[67]North Stonington, Strict Congregational Church, Documents, #5.

[68]North Stonington, Records, I, 117, 119.

[69]Norwich First, Records, I, 47.

because of "the Pastors Admitting Some to Communion that are not Experienced Persons." Simeon Brown and Jemima Crandal agreed with this. Sylvester Baldwin of the same church separated because the Church "hold the Sacrament of the Supper to be a Converting Ordinance."[70] He accused the church of admitting even those who knew they were unconverted. Oliver Prentice, also of North Stonington, objected that the Half-Way members were allowed to come to communion without having to be admitted by the church, presumably on the theory that baptism was a sufficient criterion for full communion. Prentice wished the unregenerate to be warned "of their Danger, with meetings & Fear."[71] Samuel Wilson of Brooklyn First church offered two reasons which encouraged him in his separation; these were: "our not allowing of Lay Persons Exhorting Publicly, & not making Conversion a Form of Communion."[72] Mary Wilkinson refused to appear before the Scotland church to justify her absence from communion but "In Private Discourse She Said, We Admited to Communion Persons That Were Not Converted, for Which Reason She Separated.[73] In a declaration of grievances against the regular church in Scotland, the Separatists protested that, "they

[70]North Stonington, Records, I, 111-112, 116-117.

[71]North Stonington, Records, I, 122.

[72]Brooklyn First, Records, I, 58.

[73]Scotland, Records, III, 44.

receive members into the Church Without giving personal satisfaction to the Church that they are members of Christ by declaring what God hath done for their Souls."[74] At Mansfield, the regular church rejected the Separatists' complaints and replied to them that, "It is Unjust & uncharitable to Suppose that they [the Church] demand a hypocritical Consent, or that they receive one person to Their Communion who has no visible Signs of Grace at all, or which Comes to the Same thing who are destitute of everything that belongs to the Carracter of a real Saint."[75] Hugh Calkins of Norwich separated because he had been "received into this Church when he was unconverted & now he had no business with them. . . ."[76]

Similarly, in the covenants which the Separate churches adopted the pure church figures prominently. The Preston Separates entered "solemn covenant with God and one another, under the sweet and powerful agency of the Holy Ghost."[77] Among the Sutton Separatists "additions were made to the Chh. in this manor (viz) persons telling there Experiences how the Lord brought them out of darkness into his

[74]Scotland (Brunswick), Strict Congregational Church, Records, p. 1.

[75]Mansfield First, Records, volume "A", 58.

[76]Norwich First, Records, I, 40.

[77]Browning, p. 50.

marvelous light, & takeing them nearer to himself. . . ."[78] At New London the Separatist church under Davenport's brother-in-law, Timothy Allen, required a rigorous examination of experience before admission. Joshua Hempstead gives an interesting account in his diary of an unsuccessful application at this church:

> "Wednsd 2 Feb. 1742-43 . . .Natt Williams of Stonington Lodged here. he went over in the Evening to mr Hills alia Allins at the House that was Samuel Harris's (now the Shephards Tent) and thare Related his Christian Experiences in order to have their approbation but behold the Quite Contrary, for they upon Examination find him yet in an unconverted Estate & Judged him So & he Confesses the Justice of their Judgement & Says that he hath Judged others Diverse times and altho he is unwilling to believe it yet like others is forced to bear it."[79]

The most explicit covenant of a Strict Congregational church is that of North Stonington. The process of conversion is clearly described in article 15: "God has made us Believe by Sending according to His promise John 16: The Holy Ghost in to our Souls who has made a particular application of the above articles first convincing us of our Lost Condition by Nature as being a Just Sentance of Condemnation for our originall Sin and all so for our actual [transgression] of the Heinous Nature of unbelife which kept

[78]Canterbury, Strict Congregational Church, Papers, I, #99-100, "A Narrative Account of the Separatist Church of Sutton."

[79]"Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," New London County Historical Society, Collections, I (1901), 405.

us of[f] from God and all Douty till God by his Spirit brought In to our Souls. . .the Grace of the Gospel. . . ." Article 22, section 6 warns "That at all Times the Dors of the Church Should be Carefully kept against Such as Cannot Give a Satisfying Evidence of the work of God upon their Souls. . . ."[80]

The Separatist movement pushed ahead rapidly in the period from 1745 to 1750. Altogether, there were probably about thirty organized Strict Congregational churches, or about one-fourth the number of regular churches. In many ways, however, the Strict Congregationalists were important beyond their numbers, because their ideal was better suited to a declining church membership, and because it was so solidly based upon the sort of church that many ministers of the established churches wanted in essence, and for which they would eventually surrender the world.

But not without a struggle. There were, in 1750, three distinct and mutually antagonistic religious groups within Connecticut Congregationalism. There were those like Joseph Fish, Thomas Clap or the Whittleseys, who wanted to establish a "church," universal in its membership, and offering a means of grace in the Eucharist. The Separates, like Solomon Paine or Bliss Willoughby, wanted a sect,

[80]North Stonington, Strict Congregational Church, Documents, #5.

separate from the world. But there were also those followers of Jonathan Edwards, who in Connecticut included Joseph Bellamy and John Smalley, who wanted to preserve the traditional church-state connection, and saw no reason why at the same time the church should not exclude the unregenerate. Although their ideal was a "pure" church they abhorred separatism. Jonathan Edwards, in fact, became more vehemently anti-separatist the closer he came to a "closed communion." In his Thoughts on the Revival (1741) he excused the excesses of the more rabid revivalists because he felt "it is natural for such to form their notions of a state of grace wholly from what they experience. . .for they have never been taught much about a state of grace." In his Humble Inquiry, on the other hand, he made clear his opposition to any separation from the established order. Similarly, Joseph Bellamy, in the very act of closing the communion at Bethlehem, Connecticut, blamed the Separates for having provoked God. Much of the theme of the following chapters will be the ultimate reconciliation of the Separatists and Edwardeans, which was nearly complete by 1800.

Chapter IV

DISRUPTION OF THE STANDING ORDER

The half-century following the end of the Great Awakening was a time of profound crisis for the Congregational system in Connecticut. The Standing Order was clearly in decline, and was successfully defied by various heterodox groups. Within the established church the clergy were seriously divided. The state began to shirk its role as defender of the faith. And throughout the period, forming a constant theme for present despair and apocalyptic vision, was the steady decline in full church membership. It was against a background of controversy, pessimism, and apparent religious decay that the dream of a national church vanished in Connecticut, and the reality of a pure church came to triumph.

The Standing Order was mortally injured by the fact that fewer and fewer persons were coming to the Lord's Supper. That such a decline was taking place is abundantly clear from the dirges of the ministry, in constant plaint that "we belonged to those miry and marshy Places that were not to be [seeded] but given to salt."[1] Fortunately, we need not rely upon the moans of the clergy, who were, it often seems, about as congenitally unhappy as a Hebrew

[1]Warren, Records, Book 2, pp. 27-28.

prophet. The records of church admissions tell clearly a story of religous decline--if that can be measured by church membership. Even in those churches where membership was open to the unregenerate, there is a clear pattern of decline. In Sprague where a profession by applicants of "the hope which they have within them" was considered desirable, but where the church felt itself obliged to receive all those whose "lives and conversation are externally agreeable to the gospel," the rate of admissions to full communion was only 2.5 per year from 1750 to 1800. Furthermore, the ratio of women to men in admissions was increasing very rapidly. From 1769 to 1778, twelve men and seventeen women were admitted, while from 1790 to 1799, eight men and twenty-four women joined the communion. Religion was becoming woman's work. In Sprague, baptism was administered to the children of non-communicants, but even so, baptisms fell far below births. From 1769 to 1778, there were 173 births recorded by the minister, and 110 baptisms. From 1790 to 1799, there were 179 births, and only eighty-seven baptisms.[2]

In New Milford, another Stoddardean church, where admissions had averaged 4.5 per year from 1752 to 1771, there was a tremendous decline throughout the next two

[2]Sprague (Hanover), Records, I, 10-11, 61, 65-71, 101-124, 201-216.

decades. In the next eighteen years, there are recorded only nine admissions to full communion.[3] In Lebanon, admissions over thirty years averaged about three per year, while one person each year "owned" the covenant, and became a Half-Way member.[4] In the neighboring Lebanon First church, which had always had a large number of admissions, averaging about ten each year for a century, the rate of admissions in the period 1775-1800 was less than half the rate of admissions in the period 1725-1750.[5]

The decline in church admissions was sharpened by an increase in the number of persons who refused to join the church in full because they found themselves uncertain of their regenerate state, and had too "scrupulous" a conscience to partake of the sacrament, even though they were regarded by the church as regenerate and were encouraged to overcome their doubts.[6]

The problem of the scrupulous non-communicant was clearly widespread, and affected churches of all sorts--open or closed. The scrupulous seems also to have existed in large numbers, although here, as in all cases where

[3]New Milford, Records, pp. 13, 26-27, 47-58.

[4]Lebanon (Goshen), Records, II, 119.

[5]Lebanon First, Records, pp. 1-35.

[6]Edmund Morgan, "New England Puritanism: Another Approach," William and Mary Quarterly, XVIII (1961), 236-242.

statistical evidence would be welcome, the records are meagre. That the problem was increasing after 1740, however, is evident from the growing attention paid it.

In the Coventry First Church, there were in 1795, sixteen male and thirty-four female "Professors of Religion." Of these, thirteen men and sixteen women were identified as: "The following had not come to the Lord's Table." These twenty-nine non-communicant "Professors" were not regarded as Half-Way members.[7] In New Milford, where the scrupulous were allowed to own a covenant in lieu of attendance at the Communion, 145 persons chose this option and only forty-one entered directly into full communion over a twenty year period.[8] In Sprague, from 1774 to 1782, twenty communicants were admitted, and another thirteen persons entered the church but professed scruples about attending the sacrament.[9] In Danbury First church, twenty-seven persons joined the church in full communion between 1770 and 1773, while ten others were listed as "those who have entered into Covt for the present forbore coming up to the Lords Supper."[10]

[7]Coventry First, Records, II, 5-7; I, 26.

[8]New Milford, Records, pp. 13, 26-27, 47-58. As at Coventry, the scrupulous at New Milford were not regarded as "owning" a Half-Way Covenant.

[9]Sprague (Hanover), Records, I, 61, 65-71.

[10]Danbury First, Records, V, 18-26.

There can be no doubt that the problem of the scrupulous was widespread. Most churches had to make some sort of compromise with those who felt themselves temporarily (everyone hoped) unworthy of receiving the sacrament. The church of Norfolk in 1761, for example, declared that "there is but One Covenant" and every one who enters that Covenant "have a Right to and ought to come to the Table of the Lord --Notwithstanding we are willing to give all reasonable Indulgence to tender Consciences, till Light can be afforded them in this Affair, nor do we think them Censurable till they appear to have so much Light as to be self-condemned."[11] The Sprague church voted in 1774, "After Suitable deliberation, . . .To admit persons of good lives and competent knowledge who are afraid to approach the Lord's Table, to come and renew the Covenant. . . ." The covenant was amended specifically for these persons, who now promised "to make it our serious and careful endeavor in the use of all appointed means to see ourselves prepared for, and so come and attend upon it [the Communion]."[12] Similarly, the covenant of the First Church in Winchester was altered in 1774 by the insertion of a clause reading: "Only in case you may labour under any Scruples of conscience with respect

[11]Norfolk, Records, IV, 3. This is a typewritten copy of volume I and has been correlated with the original in regard to the above data.

[12]Sprague (Hanover), Records, I, 13.

to your [immediate?] attendance upon the Lords Supper you may be indulged in your absenting until you have had proper Light for conviction."[13] The Stonington First church allowed a Half-Way status to those with "some scruples respecting their own prepardeness of heart" but other churches went further, as at Coventry Second where it was voted in 1799, "That all those that have professed religion in this place and have withholden themselves from the Communion at the Lords Table by reason of certain scruples of Conscience be considered as full and acting Chh. members."[14]

It has been argued that the claim of "scruples" was a counterfeit, and that the real reason such persons refused to come to the Communion was their reluctance to carry the burdens of full church membership.[15] This may have been true of an earlier time, but society in eighteenth-century Connecticut was not so small or intimate that a small body of saints would have to work double-time to keep the church running, and it was special skill, such as legal training, that was more in demand in government.

[13]Winchester First, Records, II, 12.

[14]Stonington First, Records, IV, 88; Coventry Second (North), Records, V, 29.

[15]This is the argument of Darrett Rutman in his article, "God's Bridge Falling Down: 'Another Approach' to New England Puritanism Assayed," William and Mary Quarterly, XIX (1962), 408-421.

It seems, as Edmund Morgan believes, that the scrupulous were intensely religious. Many of these non-communicants were called upon to explain themselves, and some of their replies have survived. Surely such a person as Joseph Woodruff of the First Church of Farmington was not atypical. In April, 1753 he wrote to the church: "I would inform you that I am at greate uncartances about my good estate and am afraid of dishonering god and ronging my one soul. . . . I would inform you that I do not stay away because I am affended with you and wrong my own soul because I do not like the dicipline neither do I count myself better than others and if you would instead of flinging and [beating] of me pity and pray for me if I am ever convict that I am in an error I will retract and own the fault and am willing to hear reasons from any."[16] In Lebanon, Ichabod Brewster remained away from the communion because of "his own unworthiness," but he finally joined the Anglican church at a time, 1774, when such a move was hardly expedient.[17]

That the scrupulous were very interested in their religion is clear from their determination to have their children baptized, at a time when not all children were baptized. In Waterbury First Church a petition was sent to the minister in 1800, after the Half-Way Covenant had been

[16]Farmington First, Records, III, Misc. Document #1.

[17]Lebanon (Goshen), Records, II, 37-38.

abolished there, in which the non-communicants proclaimed that "we have a right to offer up our children in baptism without being under a necessity, perhaps against our consciences, of partaking of the Lord's Supper." Shortly thereafter, the church voted, "That in case any person, or persons, of a good moral character, desiring to unite with this church, should be scrupulous in his own mind, as to making the preliminary to the Covenant, he may be excused."[18] In other words, the scrupulous could become non-communicating members of the church, the phrase "Half-Way" being scrupulously avoided by the minister. At Franklin the church voted in 1783 to refuse baptism to the children of those "who have owned the Covenant, and who neglect to come to the Lord's Table." This aroused strong protest, and the church quickly resorted to a dodge--neighboring ministers were allowed to come to Franklin to perform such baptisms as the church had voted to refuse.[19] Most churches, however, seem to have admitted children of the scrupulous to the sacrament of Baptism as a matter of course.

"Scruples" were apparently less of a problem in the Separate churches, because certainty of conversion was demanded before admission. Compared to the widespread evidence of scrupulosity in the established churches, there is only

[18]Waterbury First, Records, VII, 47-52.

[19]Franklin (Norwich West Farms), Records, I, 126-129.

one reference to a person refusing to attend the Supper for this reason in the extant records of the Strict Congregational Churches. In 1787, Lucy Fish "was Rec'd into the Charity of [the Strict Congregational Church of North Stonington], but for some Reasons in her own mind did not Joine in full--has Since Join'd in full."[20] When we consider how common it was for saints to doubt at times the reality of their conversion, it seems odd that the Strict Congregationalists were not affected by this problem. The records indicate either that the Separatists maintained their first assurance of conversion, or that one of their enemies was right when he charged:

> "Where you have pronounced a Person to be converted from [in] your Fellowship with his Experiences, your Credit as a Party, and as a pure Church that consists only of gracious Persons, naturally leads you to warn him against examining and doubting his Conversion. . .Your Conduct in some Instances of this Kind is well known."[21]

The problem of the scrupulous non-communicant had existed in New England from her earliest days, but the records of the local churches in Connecticut clearly indicate that the problem was increasing after 1740, and was especially keen in the period when debate over the duty of

[20]North Stonington, Strict Congregational Church, Records, Document #16.

[21]Robert Ross, A Plain Address to the Quakers, Moravians, Separatists, Separate-Baptists, Rogerenes, and Other Enthusiasts (New Haven, 1762), p. 79.

the unregenerate was most intense.[22] The Awakening had intensified the desire for conversion and had persuaded many people that an experience was necessary for reception of the Bread and Wine. Following the decline of the Awakening, a "New Divinity" emerged in New England, in which the helplessness of the natural man to save himself was continually stressed. These factors, I believe, explain the growing number of persons in Connecticut who refused to endanger their chances for conversion by an unworthy reception of the sacrament.

The ultimate triumph of pure church ideas was fostered by the decline in the number of communicants because this decline cut away the ground from one of the most powerful non-scriptural objections against the pure church, namely, that it would result in an unchurched population. Connecticut, it seemed, was becoming unchurched anyway, despite the invitations issued to the hopefully regenerate, or even the outright unregenerate, to attend the Communion. It must have struck the attention of worried ministers that, by and large, the people of Connecticut were hostile, or at best, uninterested, in easy admission to the Lord's Supper.

The religious decay so lamented at the time was a

[22]George Nye Boardman, A History of the New England Theology (New York, 1899), p. 173. Boardman puts this between the years 1765 and 1773.

negative force that encouraged the growth of the pure church ideal. Similarly, the internal disorganization of the Standing Order and the growing estrangement of church and state directly aided the pure church through the weakening of the state church.

If ever the Standing Order needed the power of the magistrate, it was between 1740 and 1800. There had never been before such a variety of sects disturbing the peace and steady habits of Connecticut. The advance of Deism seemed to be unstoppable, especially during and after the American Revolution, when French influence was at its height. The state of Connecticut finally felt compelled to outlaw Deism in 1796.[23] Closely allied to Deism, Universalism seemed to destroy any basis for morality by preaching the eventual salvation of all men. Timothy Dwight's The Triumph of Infidelity depicted the likely results of Universalist doctrines:

> "No longer now by conscience calls unmann'd,
> To Sin, the wretch put forth a bolder hand,
> More freely cheated, lied, defam'd and swore;
> Nor wished the night to riot, drink, or whore;
> Look'd up, and hist his God, his parent stung,
> And sold his friend and country for a song."[24]

[23]Deism and atheism were made felonies, punishable by loss of all public employment for the first conviction, and of all legal rights for the second. Acts and Laws of the State of Connecticut [Revision of 1796] (Hartford, 1796), p. 183.

[24]Timothy Dwight, The Triumph of Infidelity (Printed in the World, 1788), p. 24.

There were also Separatists, Separate-Baptists, Baptists, Rogerenes, and Sandemanians, all of whom had in common a self-righteous contempt for the Standing Order and its compromise with the filthy world. The Congregationalists faced the further threat of an Anglican episcopacy established on the soil of New England, and perhaps even an Anglican establishment in Connecticut.[25]

Despite this sea of troubles, the Congregationalists took up arms against one another. Indeed, the worse the situation became for Congregationalism, the more bitter was the fraternal strife among Congregationalists, the theory being that God's displeasure must ultimately be traced to a failure of His own people. The Congregationalists blamed one another for the evil days upon them, and called one another by the opprobrious terms of "New Lights" and "Old Lights."[26] Of this controversy, much has been written and little is known.

[25]Carl Bridenbaugh, Mitre and Sceptre (New York, 1962), pp. 171-207.

[26]The name "New Light" was probably the first to be coined, and it carried an abusive meaning--anything "new" in theology was of course regarded with ill favor in the eighteenth century. Those who used the word at the time would have applied it most readily to someone like James Davenport. Ultimately, the followers of Jonathan Edwards came to accept the designation, although in a grudging fashion. Joseph Bellamy did not consider himself a New Light, but by 1818, when Benjamin Trumbull, an ardent Edwardean, wrote his History of Connecticut the term has a fairly precise meaning. Although New Lightism had become respectable by then, Trumbull never failed to add the qualifying "so called" after every mention of the term New Light.

There is an extensive literature on the topic which begins with the assumption that the Old Lights were against the Revival. One of the standard accounts of the Great Awakening states this clearly: "Revivalists were collectively designated New Lights, while the adversaries of the Awakening were Old Lights."[27] Implicit in such a judgement is the belief that there was a very hard division between Old and New Lights. That the terms were used obviously indicates that there was a controversy, but both terms were long used, in a pejorative sense, without precise meaning. Many historians quote Jonathan Edwards to justify the interpretation of two clearly opposed philosophies. "Such distinguishing names of reproach do, as it were divide us into two armies, separated, and drawn up in battle array, ready to fight one with another; which greatly hinders the work of God."[28] It should be immediately obvious that Edwards did not consider himself a member of either army, and one wonders how many more neutrals there were.

It has been very difficult to define the differences between New and Old Lights, principally, I think, because

[27]Gaustad, pp. 67-69.

[28]Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards ([New York], 1949), p. 178; Gaustad, p. 67. Gaustad takes Edwards much too literally and has drawn up an appropriate analogy of two armies, opposed on the flanks and in the center, with captains, banners and all the other pomp of glorious war. The best battle analogy would be Arnold's darkling plain, or Vietnam.

there is less there than meets the eye. Nineteenth-century historians tended to regard New Lights as "good" Calvinists, and the Old Lights as sort of lapsed Calvinists. More recently, the New Lights are liberals; Old Lights conservative. The best comment on the difference was made by Perry Miller: "Neither side knew exactly what they were doing, or realized for decades what they had done. . . ." Miller believes the dividing line cut through conflicting views of the nature of man. To New Lights, man was emotional and had to be reached through "heart" religion; to Old Lights, man was rational.[29] We still need a study that would attempt to establish criteria--theological, psychological, and sociological--with which to distinguish New and Old Lights. Opposition to the revival will not do, unless one is willing to regard as hypocritical the repeated public and private statements of Old Lights that they regarded the revival as a work of God.

It appears actually that the greatest cause of controversy in 1741 in Connecticut was over certain objectionable features of itinerant preaching. It was traditional in New England for pastors to exchange pulpits, but this was always the result of gentlemen's agreements among the clergy. The novel, and disturbing, feature introduced during the

[29]Miller, Edwards, p. 179.

Revival was the practice of permanent itinerancy. Men like Whitefield really had no parish to speak of, and claimed a Scriptural right to wander about at will. Logically speaking, anyone could be called to itinerate--laymen as well as clergy--and the itinerant, being "called" of God, had no need of invitations. Every itinerant was a potential Davenport. Aside from this, the tactics used by Whitefield to gain access to the pulpit were in some cases high-handed and his slanderous remarks against the neighboring clergy must have aroused the antagonism of moderates and men of good will against the whole practice of itinerancy.

But "New Lights" were by no means of one mind in regard to itinerancy. Gilbert Tennent was opposed to lay preaching, and Benjamin Colman believed that the itinerant should have the consent of the parish before he spoke. What probably tended to make a man New Light was simply the fear that the Old Lights were opposing the revival in its entirety. In this they were certainly mistaken, but the decline of the revival was proof to their eyes that their fears were justified. I think the best generalization that can be made of the New Light-Old Light conflict is that while the controversy was real enough, the basis for the conflict was probably subjective. It would follow that there were various shades of Light, and that many of the clergy (and perhaps many historians) were completely in the dark.

That itinerancy was at the core of the controversy in 1741 is undeniable. Acting upon recommendations of the General Consociation of November, 1741, the General Assembly passed a series of coercive acts, all aimed at abuses connected with itinerant preaching. No lay person was allowed to preach on pain of arrest and a £100 bond for future good behavior. No ordained minister was to preach in a pulpit where he had not been invited by the pastor AND "a major part of the church." Penalty for violation was, theoretically, loss of salary. No Association was to license persons to preach beyond its own jurisdiction; every minister cooperating in such licensing was to lose his salary. Finally, uninvited preachers from other colonies were to be treated as vagrants and transported out of Connecticut.[30]

The ecclesiastical civil war which resulted immediately from these acts may be quickly traced on the Associational level, where the quarrel is bitter enough, and confused enough, to indicate what a more local survey would reveal. There were in 1741, six ministerial Associations in Connecticut.[31] Each of the counties of Hartford, New

[30] Records of the Colony of Connecticut, VIII, 438-439, 454, 569-570.

[31] In 1751 Litchfield County was created with its own Association. This new county was basically an off-branch of the Fairfield East area.

Haven, New London, and Windham had one Association, while Fairfield County had two--Fairfield East and West. Of the six Associations, it is safe to say that three were Old Light, in the sense that they were anti-itinerant. The New Haven Association was "unanimously of the opinion that in ordinary cases it is not well for any minister to preach in any parish which is not his own charge, unless with the Countenance and Approbation of the settled minister of said parrish first had and obtained." This resolution was passed in May, 1741, even before the General Consociation or General Assembly had acted. In September, 1742 the New Haven Association praised the General Assembly for the law suppressing "ecclesiastical abuses."[32] The Hartford County Association also acted before the civil authorities when in August, 1741 the Association voted to censure itinerancy. In October, 1741 the Association voted that no one was justified in going to any but "his own Lawful Pastor" even if that pastor were unconverted.[33] The New London Association also expressed its approval of the anti-itinerant law shortly after its passage.[34]

[32]New Haven West Association, Records, II, 18, 24, MSS, Connecticut State Library.

[33]George L. Walker, ed., Diary of Rev. Daniel Wadsworth (Hartford, 1894), p. 74 footnote.

[34]Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London, 1852), p. 451.

It seems likely that Windham County's Association was in favor of the law, but there is nothing in the extant records to support a firm conclusion.[35] Fairfield West Association denounced the law, but did so on the grounds that the law would not be effective. While the orthodox, law-abiding minister would be restricted to his own parish, "Those that have been disorderly will not probably be reclaimed by it. Some no doubt, will have the Resolution to suffer Bonds and imprisonment, others from pitying their Sufferings will be lead to espouse their Cause and embrace their Principles, and the Odious Character of Persecutors will be affixed to all that oppose them." Fairfield West also objected on principle to the breaking down of the separation of church and state.[36]

Fairfield East, however, was unequivocally "New Light" or pro-itinerant. In 1742, the Association protested the law because of the "very threatening Aspect which, to us, it appears to have upon vital Religion in General, as well as upon the Peace of our Churches." The Association called attention to the fact that orderly itinerancy was one of God's means in the Awakening.[37]

[35]Ellen Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1874-1880), I, Book III. See also her MSS transcription of the Association records at the Connecticut State Library.

[36]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), VII, 261.

[37]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), VII, 263.

One might conclude that there was a fairly straightforward division: three counties clearly opposed itinerancy and applauded the punitive law adopted by the Assembly; one county opposed itinerancy but rejected secular appropriation of "The Keys of Ecclesiastical Discipline"; while one county approved itinerancy and denounced the law aimed against the practice. But, of course, the ministerial Associations hardly spoke for the whole county. The law against itinerants was only sporadically enforced, and by 1743 there was something of a strike on the part of those who were supposed to apply the law. In one remarkable instance, the justice of the peace at Groton released an itinerant who had been passed on to him for shipment out of the colony.[38] It was probably this sort of defiance that induced the General Assembly to expel several justices from their office.[39]

It is obvious, also, that the Associations did not even speak for all of the ministers in their respective counties. The New London Association, for example, contained at most twenty-five churches, and while the Association endorsed the anti-itinerant law, five ministers in that

[38] Caulkins, p. 452.

[39] Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven, 1818), II, 174. "The legislature. . .proceeded to deprive of their offices, such of the justices of the peace and other officers, as were new lights, as they were called, or who favored their cause."

county signed a protest against the law "Because the tendency of this law seems to us evidently to be the Restraint of Itinerant preaching which, at least as one principal means in the hands of a gracious God. . .a glorious Revival of Religion hath been begun and carried on. . .is (we humbly Conceive) as evident as the nature of those things will allow. . . ." Altogether, twenty-three ministers signed this protest, a considerable proportion of the total ministry.[40]

"Persecution" was not unanimous, therefore it was ineffective. Since each Association regarded itself as autonomous the persecuted in one county might find a ready sanctuary in another. There was perpetual rivalry between the neighboring counties of New Haven and Fairfield East. New Haven arrested a layman for preaching in January, 1742; Fairfield East ordained him that December. The New Haven Association denounced the Presbytery of New Brunswick for "intermeddling" or sending its ministers into Connecticut; Fairfield East welcomed the Jersey itinerants. Fairfield East even made incursions into New Haven county, when Samuel Cooke assisted in "pretendly gathering a Church among the

[40] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), VII, 262. The best estimate of the number of churches in Connecticut in 1742 would be about 120, a few of which might have been temporarily lacking a pastor. See chapter II, . Trumbull, II, 527-533 lists all of the ministers in Connecticut from 1636 to 1763, but the list must be very incomplete as he accounts for only 103 churches in 1763.

Separatists at New Haven." The New Haven Association demanded an apology from Cooke while the Fairfield East Association voted its approval of Cooke's actions.[41]

The situation in 1742 in regard to the New Light--Old Light struggle was not a static one. By 1760, the "old Lights" were very clearly on the defensive. This can be clearly traced in Western Connecticut where the famous Dana case summed up in miniature the progress of the New Lights and the decline of the Old.

Briefly, the surface facts were these:[42] Reverend Samuel Whittelsey, pastor at Wallingford, died in April, 1752. For the next six years the church sought a pastor, with the usual bickering and hard feelings that accompanied the rejection of candidate after candidate. In June, 1758 the parish seemed finally to have settled upon James Dana, a recent graduate of Harvard University.

Before his salary was arranged, someone from the parish committee sounded Dana on certain points of doctrine. This interview and a subsequent confrontation were mutually unsatisfactory, though of course both sides cast blame on the other. On June 30, the parish met and settled Dana's

[41] Historical Sketches and Rules of the Fairfield East Association (New Haven, 1859) p. 6; New Haven West Assn., Records, II, 28, 31, 33, 42; Dexter, I, 31.

[42] The following account is based upon Trumbull, II, 480-525 and Clifford Shipton's biographical sketch of James Dana in Sibley, XIII, 305-322.

salary, but not without growing opposition. In September, five church members protested Dana's settlement to the New Haven Association, charging that "he has preached twenty-one sermons in Wallingford, and has wholly omitted the doctrines of the new birth, and the safety of appearing in the righteousness of Christ; and he compared the doctrine of faith that the Rev. Mr. Samuel Whittelsey taught, to Aesop's fables and John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which we look upon as unbecoming."

As a result of this complaint, the New Haven Association called for a meeting at Wallingford on October 10. The parish, however, continued to make plans for an ordination, and arranged for nine ministers to form a council for that purpose. Eight of these ministers belonged to the New Haven Association, and naturally attended the Association meeting of October 10. Dana was called before the Association for an examination into his doctrinal orthodoxy, but refused to come on the grounds that the Saybrook Platform did not give the Association such jurisdiction! He was willing to be examined by the ordaining council, where such an examination was usual. The issue from this point on revolved about the authority of a County Association in the affairs of a local church. This is how the case was discussed by contemporaries although it was also attempted to label Dana an Arminian.[43]

[43]Dana published a confession of faith which was safely orthodox. For example: "I believe that GOD. . .purposed, from everlasting in his unerring wisdom and infinite

The day after Dana's refusal to be examined, the Association asked that Dana's ordination be delayed indefinitely. The very next day, October 12, the ordination took place. Six ministers had defied their Association in the affair. Dana and his faction were cited to appear before the irate Association but refused to come. By April, 1759 James Dana, six of the ministers who had helped ordain him, and a majority of the Wallingford First Church had been solemnly "non-communicated", and Dana had been declared deposed. The General Assembly allowed the anti-Dana minority in the church to separate from him and establish a new parish, but nothing more was done in fact to punish the offenders. Apparently these were times when Christians forgave and forgot, as we find Dana delivering the election sermon of 1778 and finally retiring from the ministry because of age.

The Dana case shows clearly that a revolution had taken place within the New Haven Association. The six ministers expelled from the Association for assisting in Dana's ordination had controlled the Association in 1741.

goodness, to call and save some of the apostate race of man" and "That the condition of Justification. . .is true faith in CHRIST, which will produce good works: and that there are no works truly good, but what proceed from a principle of faith." Dana later wrote a treatise against Edwards' Freedom of the Will in which Dana rejected Edwards' identification of the will with inclination. Trumbull, II, 499-500. Emphasis in original.

Four of these six had represented New Haven county at the General Consociation of that year. Another of the Dana faction had written a defense of the New Haven Association's expulsion of an errant minister in 1748.[44]

One of the most influential members of the New Haven Association in 1741 had been Joseph Noyes, yet he figures prominently among the "outs" in the Dana case. During the Awakening, some of Noyes' parishioners asked to be dismissed from his "dead" ministry; the request was denied by the General Assembly. When a schism took place anyway, the New Haven Association did everything possible to support Noyes. By 1760, however, Noyes had no influence in New Haven county. In 1753, President Clap of Yale took away the student body from Noyes' parish, and the New Haven Association did not lift a finger to prevent this. In 1758, Noyes was suing his congregation for his salary, and here too, neither the Association, nor the General Assembly came to his aid. Later that year, he was expelled from the Association for his part in the ordination at Wallingford.[45]

Why did the Old Lights fall? It is possible to

[44]Samuel Hall, Theophilus Hall, Samuel Whittelsey and Isaac Stiles. Stiles preached the Election Sermon of 1742. Trumbull, II, 484, 493, 504; Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), VII, 250; Jonathan Todd, A Defense of the Doings of the Reverend Consociation Respecting Mr. Philemon Robbins ([New London, 1748]).

[45]Dexter, I, 85-89.

isolate one factor--that of age. The Old Light position did not attract the next generation of ministers.

There were twenty-one ministers in the New Haven Association at the time of the Wallingford controversy.[46] Of these it is possible to place six, those who were expelled, in the Dana camp. Two more were at least sympathetic to Dana, though they refused to participate in his ordination at the last minute. I have counted these as neutrals. Four ministers were active in supporting the power of the Association. This accounts for all but nine of the ministers in the Association in October, 1758.

In order to eject Dana's friends, there had to be a vote of at least 11-10. Therefore, seven of the remaining nine ministers had to take an anti-Dana position. But it seems unlikely that such drastic action could have been taken had the Association been divided by a simple majority. I am assuming, therefore, that the final vote was thirteen in favor of ejecting, six opposed, and two neutral.

[46]The following is based upon Trumbull's list of ministers (II, 527-533); even though his list is not complete it is sufficiently full to demonstrate the conflict of generations. I have used data from Dexter and Sibley to quietly correct Trumbull's list.

Two of the twenty-one ministers were colleague ministers, or assistants to old and infirm pastors. Nevertheless, colleague pastors were ordained and voted in the Association meetings. One of these two ministers, Chauncy Whittlesey, is counted as an "old" minister even though he was ordained after 1742. He was actually licensed to preach in 1737 and would normally have been ordained within the next few years. He decided instead to go into business.

Of the six hard-core Danaites, none entered the ministry after 1737. Their careers had begun in pre-Awakening times. The two neutrals balance one another, one having been ordained in 1758 and the other in 1729. Thus, of the eight ministers favorable to Dana, only one had been ordained after the Awakening, and of this individual it might be pointed out that he had only recently become a colleague pastor, and that he seems to have copied the attitude of his mentor.

Those four ministers most prominent in upholding the Association were also old-timers, with one exception. But of the remaining nine ministers, all but one were ordained after 1742. The line-up, by age groups, was therefore:

	Ordained Before 1737	Ordained After 1742
Pro-Dana	6	0
Anti-Dana	4	9
Neutral	1	1

Those who were expelled by their juniors stood for a definite concept of the church, a concept that had probably lost any attraction to a minister who had come of age in the bright promise of the Revival, and who had to preside over its gloomy aftermath.

The Old Lights--Isaac Stiles, Joseph Noyes, the Whittelseys, Jonathan Todd, and Theophilus Hall--had watched with dismay the threat of itinerancy to the established order. Joseph Noyes had been denounced as unregenerate in his own parish by the infamous Davenport, and Chauncey

Whittelsey had been compared to a stool, so far as grace went, by another famous evangelist.[47] In retaliation, they had struck hard at itinerancy. In control of the Association, they had used it to encourage the General Assembly in its suppression of ecclesiastical disorders in 1741. They had expelled from the Association Daniel Humphreys in 1744, and Philemon Robbins, in 1747, for aid and comfort to itinerants. In 1744, they ordered that the Guilford Fourth church be ostracized for having allowed itinerants to preach there. In 1745, they protested, in the name of the Association, against Whitefield's projected tour of Connecticut.[48]

They had cherished a concept of law, order and harmony, with church and state acting cooperatively, but in their own spheres.[49] They rejected pure church doctrines, such as that "the Validity of ministerial Administrations . . .depend upon the Piety of the minister,"[50] or that candidates for communion must make a public profession of

[47]Dexter, I, 613-616; Louis Tucker, Puritan Protagonist, Thomas Clap (Chapel Hill, 1962), p. 133.

[48]New Haven West Association, Records, II, 28-33.

[49]The best expression of this ideal was the Election Sermon preached by Isaac Stiles, A Prospect of the City of Jerusalem (New London, 1742).

[50]Todd, p. 6.

conversion.[51] But their sure and serene universe was tested and found wanting to a generation whose college years were brightened by the Awakening, and whose middle age was being disturbed by the Stamp Act crisis. The ancients could sneer at their opponents that ". . .'tis Evident that (how much so ever New Light they may have) they have no true Light in them,"[52] but for those born into the First Awakening, the hope of a final burst of God's grace was always strong. The older generation, for the most part, had become an ox-bow in the river of time, and their sons went off in a new current.

The role played by the General Association in the Dana affair indicates that the revolution was not confined to New Haven county. In June, 1759 the General Association adopted resolutions rebuking the Dana faction, and there is evidence that the General Association wished to play an even more decisive part in the opposition to Dana, but was prevented from doing so by the Upper House of the General Assembly.[53] The Dana forces, in turn, charged the General

[51]In 1751 Noyes' church at New Haven voted that "As to the Custom of taking Testimoy for shuch as offer to Joyne with the Church Judged it was beast to drop it. . . ." It seems pretty certain that admission to the Lord's Supper was "easy" in Noyes' church for some time before this vote. New Haven First, Records, p. 26 (Pagination begins with back cover).

[52]Isaac Stiles, p. 23.

[53]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XIII, 328. The General Consociation wished to hold a special meeting at Wallingford during the trouble. The Lower House approved, but the Council vetoed.

Association with "shameful distrust and jealousy."[54]

The Old Light-New Light struggle entered the political sphere also, and we can trace there the same pattern of Old Light decline. When the General Assembly passed the anti-itinerant law, it did so at the request of the General Consociation of 1741. Neither House of the General Assembly dissented, and the Governor approved the act. There were various attempts to enforce the act, and in 1743 the Assembly strengthened the law. By 1760, the situation was totally different. In the Dana case, the Lower House was consistent in its support of the New Haven Association, while the Council was just as consistent in supporting Dana.[55] Even earlier, the same division of the Houses was apparent; the Lower House favored the separation of Yale College from Noyes, while the Council took Noyes' side in the dispute.[56] The Dana-Noyes faction in 1760 looked to the Governor and the Council for salvation, but did so with

[54]William Hart, Remarks on a Late Pamphlet, Wrote By Mr. Hobart (New Haven, 1760), p. 40.

[55]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XIII, 329, 331-332. When the New Haven Association ordered a substitute preacher to go to Wallingford to serve the anti-Dana church members, he was arrested as an itinerant by the local authorities and forced to pay a fine. He petitioned the General Assembly for a refund, which the Lower House immediately voted to grant, but which was vetoed by the Council.

[56]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XI, 88-90, 95, 98. Unfortunately the votes are not so recorded that one can say with certainty that there was a correlation between those who voted against Noyes in 1755 and those who voted against

little confidence. They were convinced that their enemies would purge Governor Thomas Fitch and seven of the Councillors most sympathetic to the Dana party. A few years later, Fitch and three of these Council members were indeed voted out of office.[57]

To conclude: The Standing Churches were generally united on the need to suppress Separatism, but were preoccupied with an internecine controversy over itinerant preaching. In this controversy, the anti-itinerants, or Old Lights, controlled most of the Associations, the General Association, and had the support of the General Assembly and the Governor. From the outset, however, there was opposition, both lay and clerical, to the anti-itinerant law. This opposition, in the course of the next two decades, and with the coming of age of a new generation, gained control of the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of the colony. The most significant result of the New Light victory was the weakening of the concept of the parish or "national" church. At the end of their contest with the Old Lights, the New

Noyes and Dana in 1758. Joseph Bellamy noted the conflict of the Upper and Lower Houses. "Wallingford affair makes a great noise yet in Connecticut, and what will be the End, I know not." He claimed that on Dana's side there was a majority of the Council, while on the other side, he placed a majority of the Lower House and "almost all" of the clergy. Bellamy to Thomas Foxcroft, 2 November, 1759, Letters to Thomas Foxcroft of Boston.

[57]Oscar Zeichner, Connecticut's Years of Controversy (Chapel Hill), pp. 74-75, 117, 124-125, 252 footnote #40.

Lights had come closer to the ecclesiastical ideal of the Strict Congregationalists.

There was probably some fellow-feeling engendered between New Lights and Separatists because they had been persecuted by a common enemy, but much more important was the shattering blow given the established Congregational system in the reaction against persecution. As mild and as unsuccessful as the law against itinerants had been, it raised serious doubts about the advantages of a church-state connection. As mentioned above, the Fairfield West Association had been critical of state interference from the start. This reflected a growing consensus among Protestants in the eighteenth century that persecution in religious matters was uniquely Papist. The age was undoubtedly much more liberal than the good old times of Hugh Peter.

The mother land was probably even more liberal, and Connecticut was severely criticized for its use of force in matters of conscience. Despite the liberal grant of powers given to the colony in the charter of 1662, Connecticut had always to reckon with English public opinion, and no segment of that opinion was more crucial than that of Dr. Benjamin Avery and the Committee of Dissenting Deputies.[58] This was the main defense line of the Americans against the establishment of an Anglican Bishop in the colonies, for which

[58]Bridenbaugh, pp. 43-44, 50-53.

the Anglicans in Connecticut were especially prayerful.

Unfortunately, the situation in Connecticut was not well understood in London. Connecticut's agent there, Eliakim Palmer, warned in 1744 that "your Laws against the People who call themselves Methodists are a little too severe and may as such have a Contrary Effect from what is propos'd by them. . . ."[59] Palmer's warning was timely, for a short time later Dr. Avery wrote a letter, read in the General Assembly, in which he said, "I am very sorry to hear of the persecuting spirit that prevails in Connecticut. It is unaccountable, that those who live and breathe by liberty, should deny it to their brethren. If any gentlemen that suffer by these coercive laws will apply to me, I will use my influence that justice be done them."[60] Governor Jonathan Law tried to explain the purpose of the law, but Avery remained unconvinced of the necessity of state action. In January, 1745 the Governor was informed that when Avery heard the latest news of arrests in Connecticut, "he indeed trembled (he sayes) for your charter."[61] It is easy to imagine the chilling effect such a statement had in

[59]Eliakim Palmer to Governor Jonathan Law, 30 March, 1744, Connecticut Historical Society, Collections, XI (1907), 139-140. Needless to say, there were no Methodists in Connecticut at this time.

[60]Trumbull, II, 538-539.

[61]Benjamin Colman to Law, 21 January, 1745, Connecticut Historical Society, Collections, IX, 250.

Connecticut.

The retreat on the part of the civil authorities came very quickly after Governor Law's death in 1750. His successor, Roger Wolcott, made repeated concessions to the protests of the English Dissenters. But even as the magistrates became more and more reluctant to prop up the Standing Order, the churches were becoming less and less insistent upon the exercise of the police power in their behalf. The New Lights had been denouncing coercion too long to have much zest in applying it themselves when they finally gained sufficient power to do so. They quickly learned when they did--as in the excommunication of a majority of the Wallingford church--that persecution in Connecticut was a practical impossibility. It simply led the Old Lights to champion the individual's freedom of conscience. Reverend Robert Ross, the most outspoken advocate of a national church on the Stoddardean model in the 1750's, was beginning to qualify the powers of the state in matters of conscience by 1762. "All new Revelation, . . . all new Terms of Communion, let who will invent them, yea tho'Ecclesiastical and Civil Power should join in Alliance to impose them with the greatest Rigour, are to be rejected."[62]

For all practical purposes, establishment was finished

[62]Robert Ross, A Plain Address, p. 18.

in Connecticut before the American Revolution. Relief from payment of the minister's rate was granted more readily to individuals, and in 1777, the General Assembly allowed all Separatists to dissociate themselves from the religious life of the parish in which they resided.[63] The idea of a church supported by voluntary contributions, rather than a tax collected by a civil official, was quite popular in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, even among the ministry of the Standing Order, and there seem to have been a number of such ministers in Connecticut in the 1790's who relied entirely upon pew rents and good will offerings for their salary.[64]

Voluntary support of the ministry is the last step in disestablishment, and the first step in a pure church system. What it really meant was the escape of the church from the parish. No longer could the unregenerate man of property decide upon the selection of a minister. It would be only a matter of time before church and town became quite distinct institutions. It was also a matter of time before the minister became an untenured employee of the congregation, but that too is probably necessary in a pure church.

Any prospect for the evolution of a national church

[63]The Separatist struggle for toleration will be discussed in the next chapter.

[64]Charles R. Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven, 1942), p. 9.

in Connecticut was moribund even before the American Revolution. The old Congregational system, in which church and state were partners, and where the church ministered to an imperfect society in the hope of a gradual reformation, lay in ruins, the victim of a more liberal age, of massive indifference to easy Communion, and of its own instability. But even as the Standing Churches fell, a new ecclesiastical order was being raised.

Chapter V

THE STRICT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

One of the most important factors in the creation of a system of pure churches in Connecticut was the practical success of the Strict Congregational churches. Although these churches ceased to exist during the nineteenth century, they never died. Toward the end of the eighteenth century many of the Separatist churches came to an agreement with the neighboring established church and the two merged. Nearly always the reconciliation took place under conditions laid down by the Separatists. The Strict Congregationalists had never advocated schism for its own sake; they were above all interested in achieving a pure communion.[1] When this had been accomplished the need for a separate existence vanished. Strict Congregationalism was in itself viable, but its real function was to turn the religious development of Connecticut in the direction of

[1]The Separatists preferred the name "Strict Congregationalist," which had a positive sound to it, and which the Separatists considered more descriptive of their ideals. They had to accept the "Separatist" label because it had become so common. In their petitions to the General Assembly they often identified themselves as "of the Denomination of Professors of Cristhanaty. . .comenly Called Seperats. . . ." Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 232.

the pure church.[2]

In essence, a shadow church had come into being, which threatened the established order. In organizing congregations, ordaining ministers, building meetinghouses, and establishing inter-church union, the Strict Congregationalists demonstrated to both saints and reprobates that a pure church could exist physically in this world, like a candle in the dark.

Strict Congregationalism was undoubtedly a popular movement. It would be impossible to determine how many persons in Connecticut during the period under discussion accepted the ideal of a pure church because the ideal was not unique to the Strict Congregationalists, and there must have been many "saints" who were fortunate enough to have been born into a standing church where conversion was the rule of admission. The number of Separatists in Connecticut, therefore, does not at all indicate the popularity of the

[2]The importance of the Strict Congregationalists has only recently been rediscovered. Compare Oliver W. Means, A Sketch of the Strict Congregational Church of Enfield (Hartford, 1899) who concluded that the Separatists made little impact upon the religious history of Connecticut, with Goen's study or with Sidney Mead's suggestive articles on the role of dissenting groups; "American Protestantism During the Revolutionary Epoch," and "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," in Church History, XXII (1953), 279-297; XXIII (1954), 291-320.

pure church concept.[3] We do know however, that schism was so rampant during the period between the Awakenings that it seems every church in Connecticut suffered a separation at some time, even though the variations in terms of duration and numbers involved are considerable. Where the causes for separation are listed, "graceless Communion" is clearly the most prominent.[4] There was in Connecticut from 1740 to 1800 a tremendous interest in the pure church and a general uneasiness with the established church, of which the organization of Separate churches was only the most striking manifestation.

The Separatist movement took solid form between 1745 and 1750 when about forty Strict Congregational churches were gathered under ordained ministers.[5] A few of these

[3]Ezra Stiles put the number of Separatists at 1/30 of the population of Connecticut. He seems to have arrived at this figure by guessing that the number of Anglicans and Separatists was about the same. Zeichner, pp. 99-100.

[4]"Purity" is often a matter of relativity and very often the controversy over the pure church seems to have been over a matter of degrees of assurance. The disputants often denied that this was so, and it is true that one side tended to give such benefit of doubt as to exclude from the Lord's Supper only the most hardened sinner, while the other side did expect its communicants to have experienced some sort of mighty spiritual shaking.

[5]The exact number of Strict Congregational churches in Connecticut is something of a problem. The estimates vary from thirty (Means, p. 25) to fifty (a minister writing about 1820, in North Stonington, Records, III, 2). Goen gives evidence of thirty-eight organized Separatist churches in Connecticut, and my own examination of the Connecticut Archives and the Separate Church Papers (MSS, Connecticut

churches led an ephemeral existence, but most survived until conditions were ripe for their reunion with the standing churches. Some lasted well into the nineteenth century. Membership in these churches compares favorably with the standing churches. The Separatist church at Preston contained forty families or a total congregation of "about Three hundred of which there is more than fifty Church Members all belonging to Our Communion. . . ." In the Suffield First Society, the Separatists made up twenty-five of the fifty-seven legally qualified voters--over 43%. In Norwich First Society there were a little over one hundred voters in 1748, of which about thirty were Separatists.[6] A Separatist petition to the General Assembly in 1748 carried the signatures of 330 males, nearly all from East of the Connecticut River, where the petition originated.[7] Whenever a group of Separatists was granted permission to pay their rates to their own minister, it was necessary for the regular parish clerk to list the Separatist share of the parish tax separately. While the Separatist share was always a small fraction of

Historical Society) leads me to conclude that Goen's figure is the minimum number of Strict Congregationalist churches in Connecticut.

[6] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 31; XI, 35; XV, 235.

[7] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 29. There were some signatures from West of the river, but the interval of time between the drafting of the document and its presentation to the Assembly was too short to have allowed the petition to circulate very extensively in Western Connecticut.

the total tax, it was always a respectable figure; the General Assembly would not organize a new parish unless the inhabitants could support a minister.[8]

Not only were the Separatists numerous, they were also increasing. The Killingly South Separatists "Considerably Encreased & multiply'd" between 1755 and 1770. Their communicants numbered seventeen in 1755, and forty-nine in 1770. Preston more than doubled between 1761 and 1765, from thirty-seven male communicants to eighty-three male communicants. Isaac Backus claimed Divine approval for the Strict Congregationalists by pointing out in 1764 that "there has been a great revival of religion within these two or three years" among them.[9] A comparison of the admissions into Separatist and Standing Churches shows that the former were doing at least as well as the latter.

Even if the Separatist Churches had been feeble, they would no doubt have been looked upon by the Standing Order as a menace. The vitality of the Separatist movement insured that its persecution would be energetically pursued. The General Assembly began its persecution of the Separatists

[8]Here are some samples:

Parish	Total Tax	Separatist Share
Suffield First	£11,868	£ 2,414
New Fairfield North	6,620	1,300
Suffield West	7,305	299

Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 215, 223, 241.

[9]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 62; XV, 217, 219, 221; Backus, Letter to Benjamin Lord (Providence, 1764), pp. 38-39.

even before a single Strict Congregational minister had been ordained. In 1743, the Assembly repealed the Toleration Act of 1708 on the grounds that it was being abused when "those commonly called Presbyterians or Congregationalists. . .take benefit by said laws. . . ." Henceforth, all sober dissenters, such as Anglicans, Baptists or Quakers, were to apply to the Assembly for the benefit of paying rates to their own ministers. The Assembly promised that "such persons as have any distinguishing character, by which they may be known from the presbyterians or congregetionalists, and from the consociated churches established by the laws of this Colony, may expect the indulgence of this Assembly. . . ."[10]

The act was obviously aimed at schism, rather than heresy, for the Separatists were, and remained, orthodox "Calvinists."[11] Had the Strict Congregationalists adopted heretical doctrines--episcopacy, for example--they would have been financially better off, but this sort of temptation was firmly put aside. The petition of 330, mentioned above, rejected the cynical "out" offered by the General Assembly because "the grace of God hath appeared to them Teaching them

[10] Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, VIII, 521.

[11] By orthodox I mean adherence to the main articles of the Westminster Confession of 1648. Some of the established churches in Connecticut added reservations to their adoption of this creed but it remains the best test of orthodoxy.

to Deny all Ungodliness & they are determined. . .to obey God and worship Him in Spirit & truth altho' that way is called independent or Separate." They could not in conscience join the Anglicans, Baptists or Quakers because these sects had deviated from Scripture. As Solomon Paine, Separatist pastor, put it: " We had rather die, than lie to get Liberty."[12] The Separatists even drew attention to their Congregational orthodoxy. The Strict Congregational Church of Colchester pointed out "that as there is no Difference betwixet the fundemental Doctrine of the Church of England: and the Doctrines of the Gospel as held by the Churches Established by Law in this Colony So neither do they the Separatists Differ from the One or the Other in regard to those Holy Doctrines. . . ."[13] The Separate church of Suffield stoutly asserted that "the Religion which we desire to be protected in is not So new, Strange, wild or extravegant" as its detractors tried to make out.[14] Isaac Backus rebuked such slander also by asking: "But, pray, Sir, why are we so often referred to the [madmen of Munster] in this controversy about baptism? when we have in no respect a whit more, if so much relation to them, as you have

[12]Solomon Paine, A Short View of the Difference Between the Church of Christ and the Established Churches (Newport, 1752), p. 36.

[13]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 249.

[14]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 236.

to the pope of Rome." "I may boldly say," he continued, "that our societies in general, hold as fully to the doctrinal articles of your church, as any in the land. . . ."[15]

Having kept the faith, the Separatists paid the bill. From 1745 on, most Separatists were probably paying a double tax, the one required by law to the standing church, and the other a voluntary contribution to the support of a Strict Congregational minister. Inevitably, the Separatists began to stagger beneath this burden. Many began to fail in their payment of the legal rate, either because of financial hardships, or because of a stiffening resistance on the part of the Separatists to a tax more and more regarded as illegal and immoral. Solomon Paine, probably the most influential Separatist minister in Connecticut, considered the question of the legal rate in 1752 and came to the conclusion that it was wrong to pay the rate simply to avoid a fine.[16]

> "If you pay it for that End," he reasoned, "you do it because you dare not trust God with your Estates, and your Body, for fear he will let the Devil get too much of it, or cast you into Prison. . . . Again; you cannot pay it, to save what they threaten to take, without breaking a plain Command of God, viz. Take no Thought for To-morrow, etc. Matt. 6.25. . . ."

Similarly, twenty-three Strict Congregational churches protested in 1753 that the minister's rate was founded "Only

[15]Backus, Letter to Benjamin Lord, pp. 9-10. Emphasis retained.

[16]Paine, p. 47.

in Power not in Right," and that it had a "Natural Tendency to Make Ministers Mercenary." Why should the standing churches need state support, asked the Separatists, when "there is Security and Encouragement Enough for ministers in Those words I will be with you to the End of the world . . . .?"[17]

Failure to pay the parish rate should have resulted in legal action, until at last the delinquent was distrained or imprisoned. In actuality, there seems to have been as much confusion in the law enforcement process as there was within the ecclesiastical system. As one lay preacher complained, after having been arrested twice for different offenses in different towns, "in Some places men may worship God according to their Conscience only paying their Taxes to the Standing Established ministry; and in the next neighbouring Towns coersive measures are Carried on, men & women halled before the Civil Authority for nothing else but for Conscience Sake--absenting from the Established worship & peaceably Assembling together to Worship God according to the Dictates of their Conscience." In some parishes, the Separatists received so much sympathy that it became difficult to elect anyone to collect the minister's rate. Some parish meetings penalized absentees by electing

[17]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 61.

them to this unpopular position. Naturally, the person so elected refused to serve and the parish had to petition the Assembly for permission to hold another election. In Norwich, at such a special election, another absentee was chosen, and his refusal to serve necessitated a third election.[18]

Even where collectors did distrain the Separatists, as at Suffield, they were said to be personally against such persecution, but "it is law and they cant help it."[19] There was probably even more widespread opposition to the incarceration of the Separatists for failure to pay their rates. One minister at Hartford records several "ugle squabbles" at the jail, caused by mobs protesting the imprisonment of Separatists.[20] The reluctance of the law enforcement officials, and the sympathy of the populace in some areas, softened the persecution of the Separatists but their sufferings remained real. The financial penalty for membership in a Strict Congregational church could, and did, lead to impoverishment for some individuals since the goods were sold for a song. One of the more pathetic cases on record involves two Separatists who scribbled out a message to the General Assembly, being "incapable upon the Account of Sickness, and Imprisonment of Sending a petition or Memorial to

[18]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 21.

[19]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 240.

[20]Walker, editor, Diary of Daniel Wadsworth, pp. 87, 90.

your Hons. according to Law." Their estates, they claimed, had been sold "for less than a Quarter of the value and no overplus Returned. . . ."[21] Similar complaints are legion: A Norwich Separatist distrained of property worth £9/9 to pay a rate of £5/13; a Separatist at Suffield losing "a Likely Coalt", said to be worth £50, and sold "at an outcry" for £21. The seizure of "one chaine one acx & Grid iron. . ." from a Norwich Separatist probably indicates bankruptcy for the victim, while many a small farmer must have been hard hit indeed by the loss of a bull or a cow.[22]

Despite the Biblical injunction to take no heed of the morrow, the Separatists were typically Yankee in their faith in hard work and its rewards; it would have been unusual if their systematic reduction to beggary did not demoralize them.[23] The most interesting example of how insidiously financial persecution did its dirty work is the case of Joseph Markham of Enfield, who "the divil had Cast" into prison for non-payment of his rates. The Enfield Separatists came to their brother's support, and, at what sounds like a highly emotional meeting of the church,

[21] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 36, 46, 52.

[22] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 43, 49.

[23] A group of Separatists told the General Court in 1751 that "We are. . .Industrious in Our Business, and. . .punctual in our Contracts. . .and we Challenge to Hold Enjoy and improve what is Our own by the Same Rules and Laws as all other Denominations of Christians do." Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 31.

Markham's steward, Benjamin Simons took a solemn vow that he "would work his fingers to the bone" for his persecuted master, lest Markham be tempted by his temporal losses to pay his rate to Anti-Christ. Unhappily, Love intruded, and Simons married, despite Markham's "advice (viz) not to marry yet because it would lay him under an Impossibility to pay his vows to him. . . ." The congregation approved Simons' marriage, but the neighboring Separatist churches were offended at this betrayal of Markham and exhorted the Enfield church "in the Name & BOWLS of Christ" to compensate the imprisoned Markham for any "damig of his outward Estate. . . ." It was pointed out by a council of Separatist churches that "benjamin simon was by the ordence of god & his owne fre Choice under the Sivil morral and Temporal government of Joseph markham and Differed nothing from a Servant--gal. 4:1,2 etc.."[24]

The persecution of the Strict Congregational churches created dissension and demoralization within those communities, but the state failed to destroy Separatism. It is probably true that one can shoot down an idea, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, the shedding of blood for conscience's sake was regarded in the English-speaking Protestant world as a uniquely Popish practice, and there were no proposals to hang, whip, or even exile the

[24]Means, p. 41.

Separatists. Even if their test had been one of blood, there is little doubt that the Separatists would have met it manfully. The fact is, however, that the persecution was limited from the onset, and there was considerable confusion in its application.

As mentioned above, the Connecticut magistrates had to consider English public opinion, and throughout the period, the New Light-Old Light controversy preoccupied the civil authorities. New Light victory in that contest led to an easement of the Separatist plight. The Lower House, which was certainly New Light by 1760, was notably more responsive to Strict Congregational petitions than was the Upper House. The fact that factions had formed and that the two Houses failed to agree so often was itself a factor in modifying state persecution in a more subtle way. This was a time when society was still believed to be founded upon a natural harmony, in which discord meant failure of some kind. Solomon Paine scored a telling point when he traced the causal relation between persecution and discord. "Alas!", he lamented, "how are the Freemen confused in their Choice of a Governor? etc. And how are the Assembly confused when they get together, one House negativing the other [?]"[25]

Ultimately, however, triumph over their persecutors

[25]Paine, p. 59.

was won by the exertions of the Separatists themselves. They quickly saw the need to organize in order to put more weight behind their protests to the General Assembly. Solomon Paine appears to have been the most active organizer in eastern Connecticut. It was largely upon his initiative that the petition of 330 was sent to the General Assembly in 1748, and he certainly played a major role in getting over twenty-Strict Congregational churches to sign a petition in 1753. As we shall see later, the Strict Congregationalists created a union of churches that was as effective as that created by the Saybrook Platform.

In their struggle against the minister's rate, the Strict Congregationalists made obvious efforts to capture popular opinion, as can be seen in the two grand petitions of 1748 and 1753. The Separatist were conscious that they were adding their voice to the general cry which "has gone through this North America Like Lightning as it were Liberty & property. . . ."[26]

The petition of 330, presented in May, 1748, adopted the current views of New England history. In it, we find that the Puritan came here to enjoy "an unalianable right, in matters of the worship of God, to Judge for himself as his Conscience Receives the Rule from God. . . ." Thus,

[26]This phrase was used in a Strict Congregational petition to the General Assembly in 1767. Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 225.

the Separatists were pleading for a God given right, and for their inheritance as Puritans. But not only was freedom of religious worship divinely ordained, the Charter of 1662, and the Act of Toleration of William and Mary guaranteed the exercise of religious liberty in Connecticut. The requirement to pay a parish rate to a minister not of one's choosing was pronounced upon the above grounds a denial of the rights of the petitioners "most of them freemen of this corporation, and all Leige Subjects to His Royal Majesty. . . ." The Separatists were arguing for their rights as men, as Englishmen, and as citizens of Connecticut.

The petition gave little practical thought to modes of redress. There is throughout a pessimistic tone--which was realistic, considering the attitude of the General Assembly--and the petition ended by threatening the wrath of God upon the opponents of Strict Congregationalism. "[T]he Judgements of Allmighty God are a Coming upon this Land," it warned, and there would be special attention paid to those who voted to reject the petition. Needless to say, the Assembly was not frightened and even took offense at what they described as "Invectives and Unwarrantable Expressions, relating to [the] Authority and Laws of this Government. . . ." The petition was rejected.

Though the petition of 1748 was barren of results, the number of signatures it contained represents a high degree of organized effort. Moreover, in the arguments put

forth, the Separatists had captured the essentially revolutionary spirit of the American experience.

The petition of twenty-three Separatist churches in 1753 was far more politic than that of 1748.[27] It was apparent that the New Light-Old Light struggle had created widespread doubts about the right of the state to involve itself in ecclesiastical affairs. Even such staunch champions of establishment as Reverend Robert Ross were beginning to place limits upon the role of the state in affairs of conscience. The Strict Congregationalists in 1753 immediately rejected all state interference. The preamble identified the petitioners as "of that denomination of Professors of Christianity who hold the Rule & Govermt of the Church to be within the Same, Commonly Called Seperates. . . ." At the same time, the petition made clear that the Strict Congregationalists were no anarchists. They are, the proclaimed, loyal citizens, asking for "no Indulgence in Idleness Immorality or anything that Affects the State . . . ." In fact, though the petition denied the justice of the tax the Separatists were forced to pay, there was nothing said about the legality of the tax. Where the petition of 1748 had denied the power of the Assembly to pass such an act, the petition of 1753 concentrated upon the evil

[27] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 61.

results of the law, which "Tend to Reduce us to Beggary and want. . . ."

Unlike the earlier petition, the petition of 1753 avoided general principles of freedom, and attacked the minister's rate on more practical lines. The chief charge was that the rate encouraged unworthy persons to enter the ministry. The low calibre of the clergy was a favorite topic of discussion in the New Light-Old Light controversy, each side reflecting upon the other. The Separatist petition probably appealed to the common sense of the matter in discovering the mercenary character of the parish rate. In contrast to Connecticut, the petition pointed to the heroic "Dissienting Interest in England," who "have Flourished and Encreased Ever Since the Days Our Fathers fled to this Land for Ease. . . ." Why? Because they "Have had nothing Else to Depend upon, [but God]; a free will Offering Has Supported the Dissienting Ministers and Churches. . . ."

It is not at all surprising that in making this sort of appeal, the Strict Congregationalists were riding upon a wave of anti-clericalism, not the anti-clericalism of, say, Voltaire, but rather the anti-establishmentarian impulse of Luther or St. Bernard. It was certainly part of the pure church ideal to make the pastor more responsive to the brethren than he would have been in the Stoddardean scheme, and this not especially because the Separatists had espoused the democratic dogma, but because of the fear of formalism

and the frustration of the prophetic impulse within a settled church system. One aspect of this sort of anti-clericalism, and perhaps again an area in which the Separatists tapped popular opinion, was a strong anti-intellectual attitude. One of the foremost Connecticut Separatists, Solomon Paine, explained that the Standing Order needed a state-supported salary because they "must have Money enough to purchase the Ministerial Gifts. viz. Accademical Degrees in Philosophy and School Divinity. . . ."[28]

Finally, the petition of 1753 included a defense of the Separatists against the charge that they had Munster-like ambitions. This was a real obstacle to the toleration and spread of Strict Congregationalism. Elisha Paine, Solomon's brother, went out of his way to assure the Windham County Association that the Separatists had no intention of slaughtering the unregenerate. He pointed out that such procedure was Papist, and that even an unregenerate man might have regenerate children.[29] In 1746 a group of Separatists pledged their loyalty to "the Government & Corporations wherein providence has Cast our Lott," and went on to "freely own the necessity of Civil Government to hold the ballance of Commutative Justice to punish vice Treason etc. and our obligation to bear our part of the charge of Civil

[28]Paine, p. 12.

[29]Letter of the Windham County Association, p. 9.

& Military Defense. . . ." Individual Separatist churches had echoed the assertion of the petition of a group of Separatists from the Norwich area that "there is no Difference between us and Other Members of the Community, but what is meerly Ecclesiastical. . . ."[30] So, also, the petition of 1753 was a collective assurance to the community that the Separatists did not mean to turn the world upside down; that they were reformers, not rebels; that they wished to fulfill their history as Puritans, and not to repudiate it.

The petition of 1753 received better treatment than its predecessor of 1748, but relief was still denied.[31] After 1753, there seem to have been no more such grand remonstrances, but individual churches and groups continued a steady stream of paper flowing to the General Assembly. There was apparently no chance that the Government would grant relief very soon to all Separatists in a single act, but local groups were released from the parish rate from time to time.[32] The Lower House was conspicuously more favorable to such petitions than was the Council. Time, and perhaps

[30] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 20, 31

[31] The Lower House agreed to consider the petition, but rejected it at the next session.

[32] For example: The Killingly South Separates were given legal (society) status around 1767; the Windham Separates in 1774; the New Salem Separates in 1774; the Canterbury Separates in 1770. Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 31; XV, 215, 244, 251, 254, 264.

the developing struggle for "American" rights, were also on the side of the Separate churches.

In conjunction with their petitions to the General Assembly asking for relief, the Strict Congregationalists used direct action on the local scene. They developed a successful technique for the extortion of relief from the standing churches, a technique that might today be called a "vote-in." It worked in this way: The Separatists were obliged to pay the parish rate because they were legally residents of the society. But this meant that the Separatists were also legal voters in that society, if they met the requirements--a fifty shilling free-hold, or a personal estate of £40 in the common list. The power of the parish meeting in church affairs was very great, and most especially so in the fact that it was the society, rather than the church, that determined the minister's salary. This power of the purse gave the parish a virtual veto power in the process of selecting a pastor. The Strict Congregationalists, naturally, detested such a state of affairs. Solomon Paine saw little virtue in a clergy established by "the major Vote of unregenerate Men, who have no qualification but to be honest Men. . .that have no Qualification but Mammon. . . ." He ascribed the hard-heartedness of the unregenerate in Connecticut to the law which allowed them to boast: "'Are we not impowered by the good Laws of the Assembly, to chuse the Minister, and say when there is Need of a Meeting-House,

and how much the Minister shall have absolutely by our own Judgment. . . .'"[33] Isaac Backus, "to shew his contemptuous thoughts of the constitution, calls the legal voters in the parish meetings, when a minister is in the question, by the ignominious name of The World; and yokes the Clergy with them."[34] The Separatists, however, used a bad means to a good end. They simply attended parish meetings and obstructed all business. It was simplicity itself to stall the selection of a new pastor because most parishes broke up into factions at such a time anyway. The Separatists had merely to cast negative votes against all prospective candidates to keep the pulpit empty until Judgement Day. In order to build a new meetinghouse, it was necessary to have 2/3 of the legally qualified voters actually vote one way or the other; the Separatists could block some parishes from building a new edifice simply by not voting.[35]

These tactics were quite effective. As early as 1747 the Plainfield First Church was complaining of "a number of People Call'd Seperates who most Contemptuously Treat the Whole Body of the Standing Ministry," and who tried to block the ordination of a new minister.[36] In 1748,

[33]Paine, p. 6.

[34]Joseph Fish, The Examiner Examined (New London, 1771), p. 83.

[35]Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, VII, 334; Paine, pp. 2-3.

[36]Plainfield First, Records, I, 4-5.

the Norwich First church asked the General Assembly to grant relief from the rate to thirty persons, because "Sd. Separates appear in all our Society Meetings and they together with those who are tender of them Negative Granting any Salary for the Support of our Minister So that we were Oblig'd in the Month of Dec. last to have Sundry Society Meetings before we Could Grant any Rate for our Minister and we have not, neither Can we have any Collector who will receive any Rate Bill wherein the Body of Sd. Seperates are Rated. . . ." While Norwich had managed to pay its minister, the regular church now wished to build a new meetinghouse and agreed to a trade--the established church would write to the General Assembly asking that the Separatists be exempted from the minister's rate, and the Separatists in turn would agree to keep out of the ecclesiastical affairs of the established church.[37] In Canterbury, a long and dismal controversy within the church was traced by two of the older residents to a church meeting which "past a vot about admiting members and there was great Disturbon in the meeting," after which the Paine brothers, Solomon and Elisha, led a faction that "acted Contrary against Every minister that we had upon probation. . . ."[38] In some cases, the regular church refused to surrender to such sabotage, but the technique

[37] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XI, 35.

[38] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), X, 10.

adopted by the Separatists was hard to beat. In one amusing case, at Suffield in 1765, the General Assembly asked the regular church to show cause why a group of Separatists should not be granted their petition for relief. A regular society meeting was held and it was moved that the parish send an agent to Hartford to speak against the Separatist petition. This motion was lost 31-26, but of the thirty-one votes cast against it, twenty-five were cast by Separatists who had signed the petition in question.[39]

The Strict Congregationalists were clearly winning their battle against the rate on the local level, which was the most crucial area of activity in colonial times. Since the tax was collected by a local official, there were probably informal agreements between the settled minister and the Separatists from place to place, each agreeing to mind his own business. Although the Separatists were still by and large under the legal obligation to pay the rate of the established church, the General Assembly merely caught up with reality in 1777 when they granted relief to all Separatists.

The Lower House had passed such a bill in 1776, but the Council vetoed. In the next year, a bill similar in substance, but petulant in tone, and containing new features designed to be insulting to the Separatists, was passed by

[39] Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 235.

both Houses.[40] In order to qualify for relief, the individual Separatist had to obtain from the pastor of a Strict Congregational church a certificate testifying that the pastor and a majority of the congregation were satisfied with the individual's financial contribution toward the support of religion, and with his attendance at services. In October of each year, the Separatist minister was to hand over these certificates to the regular society clerk, who would then exempt those persons named in the certificates from any rate collected for the regular minister or meeting-house. The act specifically excluded the Separatists from voting upon ecclesiastical matters in the regular society

[40]The first such feature was the requirement of a certificate, which will be discussed. Another was the gift of a power to use coercion in collecting the minister's salary! The Strict Congregationalists never seem to have made use of this power, which of course they had long opposed on principle.

It might be noted that the Separatists were still citizens of the parish in which they resided for such purposes as the maintenance of law and order, and education. They continued to be taxed for these purposes and continued to vote upon such matters in the regular society meetings. This arrangement could only have encouraged the emergence of the society as a purely secular institution.

The mood of the Council in 1777 is evident from a comparison of the language of the act that passed with the 1776 bill:

1776	1777
"Whereas there are many churches in this State of persons professing themselves to be strict Congregationalists, who are usually stiled Seperates who soberly dissent. . ."	"Whereas there are some persons professing themselves to be Strict Congregationalists, who Notwithstanding have Seperated from the Churches & Congregations established by the laws of this state . . ."

Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 274, 275.

meetings.

The state had failed to eradicate Separatism, and recognized that failure in 1777. But there had always been a strong hope and expectation within the Standing Order that the Strict Congregationalists would be wrecked by their own internal problems, and most especially by the lunatic fringe which undoubtedly existed within the Separate churches, and which was taken as typical by many outsiders. James Davenport's confession of error in 1744 was greeted with glee by those who denounced excess. "Enthusiasts must never retract any Thing any more than the Pope, if they once give up their Infallibility they are infallibly gone. . . ."[41] pointed out one pamphleteer. Robert Ross described the qualifications for the Separate ministry as ". . .no learning nor Skill in Divinity, But. . .a prodigious Stock of Confidence, and strong Lungs; so that what he wanted in Sense and Connexion he made up in Noise. . . ."[42]

There was always a chance that Separatism would become no more than the lunatic fringe of Congregationalism. It was certainly a matter of some doubt whether any institution could survive the membership of a person like Ezekiel Coal of Sutton. Even though a layman, Coal interrupted his

[41] Anon., An Impartial Examination of Mr. Davenport's Retractions (Boston, 1744), pp. 3, 5.

[42] Ross, A Plain Address, pp. 79, 100-103.

pastor during services in order to offer prayers. One of Coal's brother saints objected, but one of the women in the congregation arose and declared "that she had been to heaven with him in that prayer and she see he was acquitted before God and that he had no thing to do witt such humain Schems." Given this sort of testimonial, Coal dominated the small church and began a reign of terror, excommunicating opponents on his own authority. The oppressed church nearly found its freedom when Coal later had a "Special Expereance about being dismissed from this Chh. and to go from place to place to preach the Gospel. . . ." The Sutton church was quick to express its agreement, but the neighboring Strict Congregationalists objected. Coal remained in Sutton, as troublesome as ever, until finally his charisma wore off and he was in turn excommunicated. After his departure, the membership in the Sutton Separatist church increased rapidly.[43]

Individualism carried to excess, and a censorious attitude toward the less sanctified were always troublesome characteristics of the Separatists. The majority of one--the man who is more right than his neighbors--was a common phenomena. "I have," argued one Separatist, "free Liberty by the Rules of the Gospell & the Naturall Rights of

[43] Separate Church Papers, I, 99-100, MSS, Connecticut Historical Society.

Mankinde to think & Judge for My Self Withoute Being accountable to any but God." Upon this basis, he refused to recognize as his pastor the man settled by a majority vote of his fellow saints. Quite often we see evidence of petty quarrels and personal enmity, such as the member of the Canterbury church who declared that "he could not join with the Chh. to communine with them while they hold Communion with Ester Baley."[44]

All in all, the Strict Congregationalist minister had a tricky congregation to deal with, but the real problems came from the clergy itself. Once a minister went into heterodoxy the church needed heroic measures if it were to survive. Unfortunately, many ministers chose the most dramatic manner in which to announce their latest vision. Isaac Davis, preaching on a probationary basis at Coventry, suddenly began to harangue the congregation one Sunday to the effect that "the Discipline that was in this Chh. was from the Divel--that all the fleshly humain tye that was between Man & Wife Parents & Children was from the Divel--that all actions that is not don in the New Covenant is Cust & the Cretuer with them. . . ."[45] This created a long controversy in Coventry over whether non-saints were guilty or not of fornication when they married. Matthew Smith, pastor of

[44] Separate Church Papers, I, 106, 181.

[45] Separate Church Papers, I, 56.

the Strict Congregational church at North Stonington for about one year, was preaching on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians when "'all on a sudden I perceived that the church did not give me fellowship. . .we parted in great confusion.'"[46]

The most spectacular case of all was, again, at Coventry. Having rejected the perfectionist Isaac Davis, the Separatists there tested and settled Samuel Drown in 1752. His ordination was scheduled, and a group of Separatist ministers invited to perform that office. During the ceremonies, the Rev. Joseph Snow offered up a prayer that was evidently displeasing to Drown, for as soon as Snow finished "sd. Drownd went to prayer & said Lord thou knowest Snow hath not prayed one word with his heart. . . ." The ordination party broke up in "tumultuous noise." Within a few years the Separatists at Coventry were so "Scattered Dispersd and Reduc'd by their Divisions and Contentions that there is not the form or Being of a Visible Church Remaining in Regular Standing." The Separatists throughout New England were urged to remember Coventry; it was to "Serve for a Warning to all Chhs. to take Heed to themselves in Respect of their Covenants that they be Well Bottomed upon the Word of God. And Such as Take the oversight of the Chh.

[46]Fish, pp. 106-110. Smith had been reading Chapter 2, verse 22, dealing with the "household of God."

may Take warning by Such Awful overturnings to be well Established in the Truth before they undertake to lead others least by their instability the Churches they undertake be Scattered and Brought Low. . . ."[47]

Many Strict Congregationalist ministers eventually decided that infant baptism was unscriptural and refused to continue the practice.[48] Although the arguments for and against infant baptism were nearly always taken from Scripture, which each minister honestly tried to take as the source of truth, we can understand the psychological attraction believer's baptism exerted over a people concerned with a pure communion. The rejection of infant baptism was a continuation of the rebellion against a graceless communion. As one minister informed his congregation: "I find it in my Hart to Let you no somthing of Gods Dealings with me in Respect of baptism that in the first place altho I Had ben taught the Ill Consequences of a Half Way Covenanting Yet I myself to my grait sorrow Have ben Establishing it: in this My Holding Baptism to be right when. . . receiveing of it in a State of unbeleaf etc. . . ."[49]

The road to the Baptist "heresy" was seldom straight and the pastor's changes of direction did little to stabilize

[47] Separate Church Papers, I, 88, 151.

[48] Goen, passim., pp. 208-296.

[49] Separate Church Papers, I, 157.

his church. The most famous New England Baptist, Isaac Backus, made a fairly typical journey.[50] Converted before the age of twenty during the Great Awakening, he became a Separatist minister in 1748. On the night of August 26, 1749 he was convinced by the Spirit (as he thought at the time) that infant baptism was unscriptural. On the next day, he preached to this effect. For the next few weeks, while his church tried to absorb the shock, Backus found himself perplexed by doubts. On September 26, he finally retracted his Baptist beliefs. That act created further doubts, and in 1751 Backus again denied the validity of infant baptism. But while he himself refused baptism to any children he professed his willingness to have neighboring ministers come into his congregation to perform the sacrament. By this time, there was a good deal of confusion within the church.

Many of those who remained orthodox had their moments of doubt. Even Solomon Paine, who vigorously opposed the "heritical & damnable" tenets of the antipaedobaptists, whom he believed bore "the mark of the Beast," confessed at one time to "Darkness and a Scrupulous Conscience concerning Infant Baptism." Paine's doubts were removed forever while

[50]The most useful summary of this phase of Backus' life is in Goen, pp. 215-224. Backus tried to remain on good terms with the Strict Congregationalists but was finally alienated by their continued attacks upon the Baptist churches. Backus to Israel Holly, 1770, MSS, Connecticut Historical Society.

he was dreaming one night in 1746, but others wandered in doubt for years.[51]

In order to overcome those forces which tended toward disruption, the Separatist churches depended upon one another for aid and advice. Although they were Strict Congregationalists, they were yet Christians, and under obligation to keep their brother. Every Separatist signed a covenant in which he promised to watch over his neighbors in Christ, while they returned such surveillance over him. Similarly, church watched over church. Because their ties were spiritual rather than civil, the Separatists churches created an inter-church union that ignored colonial boundary lines. The best expression of the attitude of the Separatists toward such union comes from a letter written in 1753 by a Strict Congregational church in New Hampshire to a group of such churches in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island:

> ". . .altho we hold that any Number of Christians Have a Wright as Christians to Enter into Solumn Covenant Together for the worship of God as a Pertikerler Chh. and Have all the Power and Authority of a Chh. of Christ without any thing Derived from any other Number of Christians whatsoever and may be a Distinct Community by themselves etc--Yet we hold that where their is any Such Distinction Between Christians without a Cause that the Gospel will Justifie--it is so far from using Christian Libberty that it Savours of Sism Rebelion and Self-will and Inasmuch as--there Hath Been a widness Between this Chh. and the united Chhs. of the Reformation in this Land--we think it Duty to Send to a Number of the united Chhs. to Come and Examin our Constitution and See what Reason maybe Given or what

[51] Separate Church Papers, I, 28, 128.

Cause may be found that we Should Not be numbered with and Brought under the watch and Care of the united Chhs."[52]

Here then is a Strict Congregational church crying out to have their covenant examined by outsiders. There was no hesitation whatever among the Separatists to ask their co-religionists for advice.[53] In 1753, for example, the Separate church at Sunderland appealed to the pastors of three other Strict Congregational churches to come and arbitrate "our Deficulties, which are So Great, that we Cant Sett Down to the Table of the Lord together, (under our Present

[52]Separate Church Papers, I, 125.

[53]Perry Miller and Alan Heimert, editors, The Great Awakening (New York, 1967) make the point that it was precisely upon the issue of "evangelical union" that the Separatists and Edwards were at odds. Heimert writes: "Edwards preserved a vision of the universal Church, while the early Separates tended to view each individual conventicle as distinct and unaffiliated with any other or larger communion. It was the profounder 'independence' of Separatism that offended Edwards. . . ." (pp. 441-442.)

The petition quoted above was written less than a dozen years after the Great Awakening and certainly within the "early" phase of the Separatist movement. Even more devastating to Heimert's argument are the records of the Canterbury Separatist Church, kept by Solomon Paine, one of the most "enthusiastic" of the Separates. Paine always refers to his church as "The Church of Christ in Canterbury," and to other Strict Congregational churches, with which he was often involved, as "The Church of Christ" in such and such place, and never as "The Church of Windham" or "The Church of Preston" and so on. The title of his book: A Short View of the Difference Between the Church of Christ and the Established Churches conspicuously uses the plural for the standing churches and the singular "Church of Christ" for the Strict Congregational churches. The Separatists were as deeply committed to an "evangelical union" as the Edwardeans were later to be, and were quite influential in the creation of such a union in Connecticut. This will be discussed at the end of this chapter and in chapters VI and VII.

Surcumstancyes) & some think, one is out of way, & some think the others are. . . ." In 1751, five Separate churches sent their ministers to Bridgewater, Massachusetts to consider the problems raised by "Isaac Backus his Travail in Baptism etc.."[54]

Starting probably with informal meetings, the Separatists achieved a pretty effective system of councils without benefit of a Saybrook Platform. These councils met local problems with quick and forceful action; their decisions betray little fear of obtruding into somebody else's business. In the case of Matthew Smith, mentioned above, a council met and excommunicated him. The moderator pronounced the verdict: ". . .I now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, declare you unworthy to have a Standing in his house, and hereby cut you off from all privileges in the same, and deliver you over to the buffetings of the devil." Another member of the council, something of a Torquemada-manqué, assured Smith that "As you are now excommunicated by the Holy Ghost, you will soon feel and curse like a devil."[55]

Councils even dared to intervene without invitation, when the local church was divided upon an issue--an act that would have led to even further chaos among the churches of the Standing Order. Very often the council acted as a court

[54] Separate Church Papers, I, 73, 126.

[55] Fish, pp. 106-110.

of appeal for aggrieved communicants and many ministers were warned against "Lording over God's Heritage." A council at Canterbury found the Separatist church there guilty of unjustly excommunicating some of its members, ruling that "the facts Charged being about a Doubtful Title of Lands was such the Chh. had no Right to hear or Determine. . . ."[56]

Aside from local, ad hoc councils, the Strict Congregationalists organized a general convention of their churches for mutual aid and advice. By 1753, the Separatists referred to themselves as "the united Chhs. of the Reformation in this Land." Early in that year, they held what seems to have been their first general convention at Norwich.[57] Essentially, the general conventions were an expression of a unity already felt, or even achieved, among the Separatists rather than an important force in creating or preserving such unity. With the exception of two general conventions, those of 1753 and 1781 where articles of faith were drawn up for each church to consider, the general convention did not deal with major problems. True, a system of licensing preachers was adopted--without denying that it was the direct call from God that made a preacher in the first place

[56] Separate Church Papers, I, 150.

[57] This information is taken from the records kept by the pastor of the Strict Congregational Church of North Stonington, and included in the records of that church: Documents, #12-17, 20-26, 31-33; Goen, pp. 167-174 discusses this aspect of the Separatist movement.

--and a roving evangelist was appointed to serve those Separatist churches whose pulpit was empty, but from 1785-1790, for example, the business of the general convention was so trivial that one wonders the institution survived.[58] Attendance at these meetings was usually poor, never exceeding nine in the period 1781-1799, and fell consistently below six after 1800. Churches that responded to calls for a local council were habitually absent from the general conventions.

The occasional council, precisely because it was an ad hoc arrangement, dealing with a specific, immediate problem, was probably the most efficient sort of general supervisory body in a pure church system. We must remember that if the Separatists looked forward, it was usually to the Millennium, rather than to an ageless church on earth.

There was finally one last threat to the Strict Congregational adventure. The State had not crushed Separatism, nor had the Separatists destroyed themselves. But would they survive success? It is almost axiomatic to point out that the forces which create a sect lose their intensity for the generation born within the sect, and that in time the

[58]The system of licenses was created by the 1791 convention. In effect, the convention was testifying to the conversion experience of the candidate. The convention of 1795 provided the itinerant preacher.

group becomes respectable, orthodox, normal--"denominational." Contemporaries of the Separatists predicted that this would be the fate of all "New Lights." Ezra Stiles even hit upon the crucial role of the second generation when he predicted that the sons of New Lights would be Old Lights.[59]

There are indeed indications that the sect to denomination process was taking place. For example, a petition to the General Assembly in 1767 from the Middletown Strict Congregational church was signed by sixteen men listed under the heading: "This Collum are church Members." Another twenty-five males are listed: "This Collom are of the Congregation." It is obvious that the "Congregation" represents the younger generation, because this Separatist church, like all others, was very definite in its belief that "the Scriptural Meathord of admiting Persons into holy fellowship In Churchmembership is By the Persons admited Passonally & for them Selves Declareing Before the Church & Congregation their Experemental Knowledg of themselves By Nature & the way of Life By Jesus Christ obtained By the Illumenation of the Holy Spirit. . . ."[60] No adult could join this church without being regenerate, and they did not practice the Half-Way Covenant. The non-communicant Congregation must therefore be the seed of the saints awaiting the fructifying

[59]Zeichner, p. 119.

[60]Conn. Archives (Ecc. Affairs), XV, 225.

effects of grace. But what if the second generation never felt that grace? What would happen then to the sons of the saints? Would they be left unbaptized, or would history repeat, and the Separatists adopt a Half-Way Covenant?

The Separatists were not ignorant of the fact that the second generation did not experience the same conditions that had created Strict Congregationalism. The Historical Narrative of the Killingly General Convention of 1781 was written expressly for the second generation, who had to be told why schism was necessary in the 1740's.[61] But was this not a mere "historical" faith they were giving their children? Could the saints possibly bequeath the actual experience of "coming out?" It appears, actually, that the Separatists remained as much a "sect" in 1790 or 1800 as they had been in 1750. In two areas especially was this evident.

The Strict Congregationalists were finding it possible after, say 1760, to attain release from the regular parish rates by having the regular society petition for such a release to the General Assembly. Sometimes, as has been discussed, the regular society was coerced into doing this. Such was the case at Canterbury. In 1763, the regular society sent a petition to the General Court, explaining that the

[61] An Historical Narrative and Declaration (Providence, 1781), p. 22.

persons named in the petition dissented from the worship of the standing church, and asking that they be allowed to support their own minister. The society clerk then asked the Separatists to write down their names on the petition. The government granted the petition. Almost immediately one of the saints left the Separatist church because of "our Uniteing with the Ecclesiastical Society. . . ." The Strict Congregational church at Middletown took an interest in the affair and demanded, for two years, that the Canterbury Separates admit their error in cooperating with the constitutional church, "that dead Body the Lord Seppreated [you] from," that "Harlot." "Let them return unto thee," Middletown urged, "But return not thou unto them."[62]

In reply, the Canterbury Separatist pastor could offer only the feeble pretext that "wee Did not aske for it [toleration]." It was apparently thrust upon them by the regular society and the General Assembly. When Middletown finally threatened to withdraw fellowship, Canterbury admitted its gross error in allowing herself to be tolerated and asked for forgiveness.

In 1777, all Separatists were exempted from the parish rate if they obtained a certificate from the regular society clerk. Israel Holly, until 1775 the minister of a Separatist church at Suffield, attacked this toleration act in An Appeal

[62]Separate Church Papers, I, 168, 180, 184.

to the Impartial in which he threatened to appeal to the Continental Congress if Connecticut did not do away with the hated certificates.[63] The Separatists wanted more than toleration. They wanted to be separated from the unregenerate world, as represented in the civil government, in all affairs of religion.

The series of mergers that took place between the Separatists and the churches of the Standing Order in the latter years of the eighteenth century also give evidence that the Strict Congregationalists had lost nothing of their original fervor. The bare fact of reunion should not be taken as a Separatist "sell-out", for in none of the mergers for which the records survive did the Separatists compromise on their basic doctrine of the pure church.

The best illustration of the attitudes of both sides --the Separatist and the Standing Order--toward union comes from the unsuccessful attempt to merge at Canterbury, an attempt that began in 1772 and ended in 1783. Like many other mergers, this one began with the coincidental vacancy of both pulpits.[64] The Separatist had left his pulpit in 1768, and two years later, the regular church granted its pastor a

[63] M. Louise Greene, The Development of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (Boston, 1905), pp. 334-335. Unfortunately this work of Holly's is not listed in the Evan's catalogue, nor have I been able to find it at various libraries.

[64] The sources for the following are in the Separate Church Papers, I, 194, 196, 199; II, 1-53.

dismissal. As in many other cases, the regular society took the initiative. In November, 1771 they sent a committee to the Strict Congregationalists, "Directed to inquire if [the Separatists] would Joine with them in giting a gospel minister to preach to the whole of Both Congregations."[65] The Separates agreed to consider the idea and appointed a committee to examine the Articles of Faith and the Covenant of the standing church. By April, 1772 a formal conference had been agreed upon. The Separatists, however, invited four other Strict Congregational churches to attend; "as we are Connected with you in a Sister Relations and Set much by the privelige of being under the watch of all the Churches of Christ: we Desire you to Send your Pastors and faithful Brethren (if you See Cause) who may hair & Judge of our Conduct in those matters Lest any of your minds Should be Dissattisfyed." The Canterbury Separates assured their sister churches that they proposed to build a church composed of "so many of us as could git a Satisfaction of Each Others gratious Sinsaraty. . . ."[66]

The Conference apparently went well, and on October 13, 1772 the regular society presented the following "heads" of agreement:[67]

[65] Separate Church Papers, I, 194.

[66] Separate Church Papers, I, 196.

[67] Separate Church Papers, II, 2.

1. The use of coercion to collect rates is wrong.

2. ". . .we find no warrant from Scripture to Exclude any after Covenanting with them that do not Exclude themselves. . .yet we think it for Edification that all Should Satisfy the Church in Regard to their Religious Experiances."

3. Despite some disagreements with the Standing Order, communion may still be maintained with them.

The first point was an obvious concession to the Separatists, but the next two were not acceptable to a pure church scheme. The regular church was probably trying to save face or to avoid a total shattering of its structure; they were reluctant to expel older members of the church who had been allowed to enter without a profession of experience. Similarly, the standing church wished to maintain its status as an established church. It should be recalled here that the general toleration act of 1777 was still in the future.

The Strict Congregational church was very prompt in rejecting these articles. "We Suppose it Essentially necessary to the well being of a Church of Christ," they pointed out, "that the Siveral Members in Joining to the Church Should be Sattisfyed with Each Others being in a State of grace which rule we Cannot understand hass ben Carefully attended to in your admiting your members Lately or Even in your first Building." As for the third "head", the Separatists refuseed to give fellowship to any church "that Do admit members in to them without profissing a hearty Sinsiar Love to Christ and Sattisfying the Church that they are real

beleavers." The Separatists noted with some irony that the regular church had dropped the Saybrook Platform and had voted that they were a Congregationalist church. But voting does not alter reality, the Strict Congregationalists chided. "We Suppose that to be a Church of Christ on the Congregational plan is in the first [Place?] to Examine the Chh. members and admit none but Such as you really belive to be true beleavers. . . ."[68]

Presumably, the regular church now realized that they would have to merge upon pure church principles if they were to merge at all. They rejected the Separatist conditions a few days later. Within a year, however, the standing church was again proposing merger, and they had finally agreed that "this church think it most proper and Expedent for Each Church to Examin and Get Satisfaction of its own members etc.."[69] But the regular church still insisted upon remaining in communion with the Standing Order in Connecticut, and union was therefore rejected by the Separatists.

As talks dragged on, a de facto reconciliation was taking place. Since both parishes were devoid of a pastor, it was agreed that members of both groups would meet together each Sunday and have a neighboring minister preach to them. This arrangement began to break down and was finally

[68] Separate Church Papers, II, 1.

[69] Separate Church Papers, II, 11.

ended by the Separatists in 1779, who made public confession of their misconduct "for Sum years Past" in attending sermons at the regular meetinghouse. They were afraid that by doing so they had implicitly admitted "that those Ministers that ware mad under the Constitution or are in falishop with them are Christ ministors. . . ."[70]

Despite seven years of a frustrating, tactless dialogue, the hopes for union were still alive, especially in 1782 when it appeared that both churches could agree upon a minister. Church articles were written, and in them the Separatist had a total victory. It was agreed that the new church would "hold Communion with all the Chhs. of Christ Who made Saving Faith and Repentence Viz. (a Credibal profession of it) nesary to chh. membership and practice accordingly."[71] The Separatists seem to have been quite happy about the merger, while the regular society (or at least its clerk) was somewhat grim. Compare the following votes taken in order to dismiss members from the older churches into the new one.[72]

[70] Separate Church Papers, II, 22.

[71] Separate Church Papers, II, 42. It should be noted that the document containing the articles is missing. The above information comes from a Separatist interpretation of the articles, but the section quoted in my text seems to have been quoted verbatim by the Separatists from the original document in order to prove their point.

[72] Separate Church Papers, II, 33, 36.

> The Separatists voted on April 29, 1782 "that any or all the members of this Church have free Liberty to unite with a Church now proposed to be gathered in this Town upon the gospel plan. . .in Consequence of this Vote all the Bretheren Except three and Considerabel part of the Sisters are all redy Joyned the new Chh. and it is likely Every one may Soon be Joyned in a new Covenant & articals much like the old. . . ."

> The regular society voted December 4, 1782 that "as many of the Congregation as are Desireous of Jining [the new church] Should Confer togeather on a Plan for a General unian in this Place. and if Sutch a happy Surcomstance migh take Place agreble to the Ruls of the Gospel and we United as in one church . . .we agree that as many of the member of this Chh. as See it their Duty and Do Join in Sutch a unon be Recomended to the watch & charge of that Chh. and if it Should So happen that any member or members of this Church Should not See it to be their Duty to Join in the preposed Union and Desire to be Recomended to any other Church of Christ whair they think they Can be Edefide that they Be Recomended."

Although it seemed that agreement had finally been reached, there proved to be too much dissension to preserve the little unity achieved. By 1783, after more than ten years of effort to merge, there were still two distinct churches in Canterbury. That union was not accomplished is explained in part by local circumstances; for example, the leading figures on either side in Canterbury were involved in a dispute over land, and this no doubt made their personal relations somewhat strained. But any attempt at merger had to overcome very strong disruptive forces, even when there was theological agreement--as there was at Canterbury after the regular church gave in on the pure church issue. The Separatists were usually abusively self-righteous in their

correspondence with the established church and they alienated many persons who wished to befriend them. The General Association of 1783, by this time strongly New Light, advised all ministers to avoid participation in councils "in matters respecting a union between Brethren of the standing churches and those of the separate preachers." if the Separatist ministry was represented in such a council.[73] The regular society was hardly a model of Christian charity either, and when one goes through the correspondence what seems remarkable is not that a merger here or there failed, but that any survived.

At Torrington, efforts to merge followed lines similar to those in Canterbury, but this time with a successful conclusion.[74] Again, it was the regular church who initiated things when two Separatists were called in and asked various questions, the most important of which was, "Wherein does this Chh. differ from the strict Congregational Chhs. in New England[?]" The answer is not recorded, but the Torrington church soon established a committee to study the matter. The tone of the document suggests that the church wished the committee to minimize the differences between them and the Separatists. The committee so reported, and the

[73]The Records of the General Association of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford, 1888), p. 113.

[74]Torrington First, Records, Misc. Papers, #19, 28, 30, 31, 34, 36, 39-41, 45, 46, 49, 53, 55.

church voted in July, 1781 to approach the Separatists.

At this point, difficulties appeared. The minister of the regular church maintained that "the Chh. have no right to prescribe to the Minister who are the proper subjects for him to administer the Seals [Baptism and the Lord's Supper] unto." Obviously, he was not suitable in the eyes of the Strict Congregationalists, and the regular church had to dismiss him in order to carry off the merger. Since both pulpits were now empty, both sides agreed to call "an evangelical Preacher; One that might be Chearfully recommended from Ministers both of the Seperate, and Standing Order (as they are called.) Such there are who are by no means Strenuous in Respect to the manner of Support. . . provided there be no compulsion by civil law." By late 1786, the two sides were close enough to hold a mutual council and to issue a "Declaration of reasons that led many of the 1st Church so called to unite with strict congregationalists so called in forming a society." In this declaration it was announced that "none ought to be admitted into the visible Church but Such as exhibit at least to the majority of the Chh. Satisfactory account to a Judgment of Christian Charity of Saving work of grace wrought on their hearts by the opperations of the blessed Spirit, and have a life & conversation in a measure corresponding thereto." Apparently the Strict Congregationalists were not yet fully satisfied, for thirty-nine adult male Separatists withdrew

from the merger.[75] By 1791, the regular church again proposed a union and submitted a covenant more explicit about the admission requirements to the Lord's Supper than that quoted above. It was now proposed that "in the admission of Members" due care be taken "that they be sound in the Faith of good characters & give credible Evidence that they are friendly to Christ & his Cause." Upon this the united church was built and a minister ordained in 1792.

At Plainfield, the regular or First society dismissed its minister and adopted a new covenant of the pure church persuasion in 1768. Thus prepared, the "old Chh. so called Met With the New Chh. So Called [the Separatists] and Cordially agreed and Joined Together in one Chh. upon Cambridge Platform of Chh. Government & Discipline as held & Exprest by the Confession etc. of the Said New Chh.." In ordaining a pastor the new church instructed the ordaining council to inquire "as to his Christian Experiences. . . ." During a seven year vacancy in the pulpit, the church was served by the pastor of a Strict Congregational church in Rhode Island.[76]

[75]The reader may note several qualifying phrases in the earlier covenant: "None ought to be admitted"; admission by a majority vote, not a unanimous vote as was required in Separatist churches; judgement of experience to be guided by "Christian Charity," a principle common in the most lax churches.

[76]Plainfield First, Records, I, 16, 26-29, 51-60.

So it went, beginning with some speed in the 1780's and perhaps culminating with the merger in 1827 of the North Stonington churches, after a long period of fellowship, and after the regular church adopted a Confession in 1810 which defined "a church of Christ," as "a number of persons publickly and credibly professing to have repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with suitable evidence of grace in the heart. . . ."[77]

Did the "sect" outlast the "church"? The Separatists certainly believed so.[78] The Killingly Convention's Historical Narrative is an outright assertion of victory. They treat the Half-Way Covenant and its miserable results as if it had all been coeval with Hammurabi. How different it is now:[79]

[77]North Stonington, Strict Congregational Church, Documents, #33.

[78]So did the author of an article on "The Separatists in Eastern Connecticut," in The New Englander, XI (1853), 195-209. He points out that Separatist principles were eventually adopted by the churches of the standing order, and that "when they gave up the Half-Way Covenant, and the ministerial rates--when they examined candidates for admission as to their religious experiences, there remained no substantial wall of partition between them and the Separatists." It is significant that the author of this article generally disapproved of the Strict Congregational movement; it was, he said, "a sad mistake." The same line was taken by Reverend Edwin P. Parker, "The Congregational Seperates [sic] of the Eighteenth Century in Connecticut," New Haven Colony Historical Society, Papers, VIII (1914), 151-161. The Separatist churches disappeared, he concluded, because they had won the standing churches to pure church principles.

[79]An Historical Narrative and Declaration, pp. 14-15, 16 footnote.

> "As to the Established Churches, such Events have taken Place as have reduced the Establishment to little more than a Toleration as to Power of Action.--the most rigorous Laws are become obsolete, or superseded by Laws granting Liberty of Conscience:--So that settling and maintaining Ministers in the Law way, is in a great Measure out of Practice."
>
> ". . .the National Disputes, about the natural and civil Rights and Liberties of Mankind. . .hath so convinced the Minds and Consciences of People in general, that civil Establishment of Religion, and coercive Measures can be no Advantage to the Building of Christ's Kingdom, but the contrary."
>
> "The traditional Custom of admitting Church Members, without requiring a credible Profession of their Faith, is laid aside; and they [the standing churches] practice according to Mr. Edwards, and others, who maintain visible Saintship, necessary for Communion; neither do they admit Persons to be only half-way Members, nor baptize any but visible Believers, and their Households."

The Narrative was written to convince the new generation that there had actually been a time when Connecticut was not populated by pure churches. They are telling their sons that the war is over, and that they are the beneficiaries of the victory. They are telling them, not to stay out, but to go back. The Separatists had run their errand into the wilderness, and they were now returning.[80]

[80] An Historical Narrative and Declaration, pp. 19-20, 24.

Chapter VI

JOSEPH BELLAMY AND THE NEW DIVINITY

1750--1770

That the pure church concept was taking hold upon Connecticut is apparent from a study of the theological literature of the time. The period 1750-1800 was an especially fertile one in New England so far as theological controversy is concerned. Issues like free will, moral responsibility, infant baptism, regeneration, the fate of the soul, and the nature of God, produced an annual crop of pamphlets, sermons and books. It was the time of a thousand flowers, and not a few weeds.

One of the questions constantly discussed throughout the period was that of the pure church, or more precisely, the question of what requirements were necessary for attendance upon the Lord's Supper. In 1750 Edwards' dismissal from Northampton led to a pamphlet war in which Solomon Williams, pastor at Lebanon, Connecticut was most conspicuous in upholding the Stoddardean practice.[1] In 1756, the Separatist Isaac Backus published an attack upon unregenerate

[1]Solomon Williams, The True State of the Question Concerning the Qualifications Necessary to Lawful Communion (Boston, 1751); Edwards, Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated (Boston, 1752); [Edward Billing], A Dialogue on the Christian Sacraments (Boston, 1762); This last work was written c. 1750-1752 and is attributed erroneously to Joseph Bellamy in Evans' American Bibliography. For Billing's authorship, see Clifford Shipton in Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IX, 23.

communion, and in the next year, the founder of the Antinomian Rogerene sect contributed his defense of a profession of experience as a prerequisite for full church membership.[2] In 1759 Ebenezer Devotion, Moses Mather and Joseph Bellamy began to argue the question in what turned out to be a ten year exchange.[3] In 1765 Samuel Hopkins inquired into the promises of the Gospel and found that the unregenerate made themselves more odious to God by attending the means of grace. In 1772, William Hart gave A Scriptural Answer, in which he warned that "The unhappy effects of the controversy relating to the qualifications necessary for a lawful and approved attendance on the sacraments of the new covenant, are becoming great and alarming in many of our churches; and will probably grow greater, and spread farther, unless this difference is composed."[4]

Needless to say, the communion controversy was not an isolated theme in the thought of the theologians involved. Moses Mather pointed out in 1770 that "When I first wrote upon this controversy I was not sensible but that the dispute

[2]Isaac Backus, A Short Description of the Difference Between the Bond-Woman and the Free (Boston, 1756); John Rogers, The Nature and Necessity of Spiritual Conversion (Boston, 1757).

[3]See below: pp. 189-191.

[4]William Hart, A Scriptural Answer to This Question, Viz. What are the Necessary Qualifications for a Lawful and Approved Attendance on the Sacraments (New London, 1772), p. 3. Samuel Hopkins, An Enquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel (Boston, 1765).

might be succesfully issued by attending only to the single points of terms of communion with the visible church: but by attending to the public debates of the present day; and the remarks made upon what I have written, I am become sensible that our different sentiments in this particular, is in a great measure owing to our thinking differently upon other important points."[5]

This was true. The pure church belief depended upon the absolute division of mankind into two categories, the regenerate and the unregenerate. Those who argued for an open communion tended to believe in a more subtly graded creation, and in "common grace" which, if improved, could lead to saving grace. Behind these conflicting views of man lay an even more fundamental difference of opinion over the nature of God. There was the usual difficulty in reconciling the divine attributes of Justice and Love. Those who argued the pure church tended to accept a God of Order, a God Who cares for the "fitness" of things. Those on the other side of the question tended to view God in a more genial light, and took at face value His promise of salvation for those who strive to enter at the strait gate. At one extreme, this school would fly off to Universalism or Manicheism but for the most part they remained orthodox

[5]Moses Mather, The Visible Church in Covenant With God, Further Illustrated (New Haven, 1770), preface.

Congregationalists.

The theological controversies of the late eighteenth century were not without resolution. From a welter of conflicting opinions a "New Divinity" emerged to become the Congregationalist orthodoxy of the nineteenth century. Although the New Divinity can be discussed without reference to the sacramental controversy, its three greatest figures, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy, were outspoken advocates of a pure church. The acceptance of the New Divinity meant the victory of the pure church concept.

To discuss the issue of regenerate communion alone, is therefore to isolate one thread of a complex weave. Nevertheless, the literature upon that subject is extensive enough to warrant special attention. There is some benefit also in placing Joseph Bellamy in the center of this chapter, for he was at one and the same time, the most prominent minister in Connecticut after 1750, the most vigorous defender of the pure church in Connecticut, and a theologian of the first rank in reputation to his contemporaries and to the nineteenth century. In him, the New Divinity and the pure church are most clearly seen as inter-related ideas.

Born of "reputable parents" in 1719, Joseph Bellamy was sent to Yale, where he graduated in 1735.[6] More important, perhaps, was the fact that he experienced a conversion

[6]Dexter, Graduates of Yale College, I, 523-529.

in 1737, at the age of eighteen. Bellamy was thus one of those young and recently regenerated saints to whom the Awakening meant so much. Bellamy's hopes were strongly millenarian during the Awakening, and grew even stronger afterwards.

Following his conversion, he applied for a license to preach, which was granted by the New Haven Association. By 1740 he had so won the approval of the congregation of the newly established parish of Bethlem (now Bethlehem), in the backwoods of Connecticut's North-West, that he was ordained their first pastor. In 1742 he itinerated widely through Connecticut, and even beyond, preaching the characteristic sermons of the Awakening--those which were designed to unsettle the too-assured "saint". "With what amazing terror, would he represent the torments of the damned!" declared one who knew him.[7] The historian and minister Benjamin Trumbull assures us that Bellamy was even greater in the pulpit than he was with the pen. Bellamy preached nearly extempore, relying perhaps only upon a few note cards during his sermon. The "New Light" style was one suited to Bellamy's temperament, for he was, according to all accounts, rather dogmatic, brusque and volatile. When the General

[7]Noah Benedict, A Sermon, Delivered at the Funeral of the Rev. Joseph Bellamy. A preface to Bellamy's Works (New York, 1811), I, 24. Hereafter all references to Bellamy's Works will refer to this edition.

Assembly passed its law against itinerants, Bellamy was very quick to organize a protest movement.

The years following the Awakening were discouraging ones for Bellamy. God's grace was withdrawn from the country, and from Bethlehem. Before 1750, when Bellamy practiced a Half-Way Covenant, there had been a dozen baptisms each year. After 1750, when Bellamy adopted the "pure church" ideas of Edwards, there were less than two infants baptized each year in Bethlehem. The number of those who had a right to present their children for baptism had obviously dropped drastically. There are no figures for the membership of Bellamy's church at any one time, but from 1751 to 1756, only fourteen persons were admitted to full communion; in the 1760's, only ten; and from 1770 to 1775, only six more. From 1750 to 1775, Bellamy was admitting only one new person each year to the Lord's Supper, and baptizing only two children each year. The church at Bethlehem may have been pure, but it was certainly small, and getting smaller.

Bellamy attributed the end of the Awakening to both the Arminians and the Antinomians. He later referred to "the delusions which I saw take place in New-Light times,"[8] and he wrote his major work, True Religion Delineated, from

[8]Richard Webster, History of the Presbyterian Church in America (Philadelphia, 1857), p. 629.

a background of disappointment at his own, and other ministers' credulity in accepting transient impressions for true conversions. The work is an attempt to guide ministers through the labyrinth of conversion, and in its attack upon Antinomian doctrines might well be compared with Charles Chauncy's Seasonal Thoughts.

It was during this period of discouragement that Bellamy thought of removing himself from Connecticut in order to take the pulpit of a Presbyterian church in New York City.[9] Bellamy had no objection to serving under a Synod. There was a lengthy correspondence back and forth which touched every phase of his settlement in New York--his salary, perquisites, rifts within the New York congregation, the danger of small-pox--but never once did Bellamy insist upon a Congregational polity. He did, however, insist upon a pure communion. One of the New Yorkers who disapproved of the invitation to Bellamy wrote to warn him that "If your sentiments with regard to church communion are such as Mr. Edwards's, it would infallibly make the rent in our church much wider."[10] In January, 1754 Bellamy was told that there were five objections to him from a minority in the congregation. The second of these objections was that

[9]Webster, pp. 629-638. There are also some letters at Yale University in regard to this affair which fill in Webster's account.

[10]Webster, p. 631.

"You are suspected of having notions too strict in the articles of visible church communion."[11] Bellamy appears to have maintained his demand for a pure church, for he was informed in March, 1754 that "as to Terms of visible Church Communion. . .Mr. President Burr supposes we shall have no difficulty on that head. Upon an attentive Inquiry I find that the most different Sentiments may well unite in that point."[12] Despite all his efforts to have his congregation in Connecticut dismiss him, Bellamy had to turn down the New York offer when Bethlehem refused to let him go, despite an offer of £100 from New York to compensate Bethlehem for the loss of its pastor. The episode clearly indicates that for the New Divinity it did not matter whether the church was congregational or presbyterian, so long as the communion was pure.

By 1758, Bellamy found everything "so exceedingly gloomy and dark, and still darker times. . .by many expected, as. . .are calculated to give consolation to such as fear the Lord. . ." for the end must be in view.[13] The last thirty years of his life, however, were active and rewarding.

[11]Webster, p. 631.

[12]William Smith to Joseph Bellamy, 12 March, 1754, Bellamy Papers, Mss, Yale University.

[13]Bellamy, Works, II, viii.

His Letters and Dialogues Between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio, published in 1759, engaged him in what was perhaps the single-most prolific source of theological controversy in pre-Revolutionary New England. In the next five years, Bellamy's work was attacked by William Hart, Andrew Croswell, and William Cudworth,[14] but it probably won for Bellamy an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Aberdeen in 1768.

Bellamy was a patriot in the troubles leading up to the American Revolution, although after 1770 we have none of his sermons, nor do we know how active a part he played in the struggle for American independence.[15] In 1786 he suffered some sort of stroke which ended his ministerial career and affected his mind. He died four years later, at the age of seventy-one.

Bellamy became an important figure in Connecticut because of his connection with Jonathan Edwards. It is not Bellamy himself, but Bellamy the Edwardean, who is of interest. Bellamy had studied under Edwards and may have owed

[14]Scripturista [William Hart], A Letter To Paulinus (New Haven, 1760); Andrew Croswell, A Letter to the Reverend Alexander Cumming. . .In Which Are Interspersed Remarks Upon Mr. Bellamy's Late Performance (Boston, 1762); William Cudworth, A Defense of Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, Against Mr. Bellamy's Theron, Paulinus and Aspasio (Boston, 1762).

[15]Two of his sons were in the Continental Army. Bellamy to [unknown], 24 November, 1776, Bellamy Papers, MSS, Hartford Theological Seminary.

his conversion to the Northampton pastor. The two remained close friends until Edwards' death. Bellamy was quite active in searching for a pulpit for Edwards after his dismissal, and even tried to get him into the Presbyterian church in New York after it became obvious that Bellamy was not going to get that job himself. Earlier, when it seemed likely that Bellamy would move to New York, Mrs. Edwards was gracious enough to offer to buy the Bellamys' slave.[16]

In their personal relationship there is every indication that Bellamy carried himself as an equal to Edwards, but in the marriage of their minds Edwards was clearly the dominant partner. A mere perusal of Bellamy's works indicates his overwhelming debt. His ideas on the will, moral responsibility, sin and "true" religion are taken almost verbatim from Edwards. It was Edwards' action at Northampton that inspired Bellamy to close the communion at Bethlehem. When he wrote his major work, Bellamy had Edwards write a preface for it. Bellamy's prime importance, in his own time as well as ours, was in the transmission of Edwardean ideas into Connecticut.

It has been asserted that Bellamy also read Leibnitz, and certainly Bellamy comes very close to the position that everything happens for the best, in this, the best of all

[16]Webster, p. 634 footnote.

possible universes.[17] He does state quite unequivocally that this universe was the best that God could have created. One of his critics invented an amusing dialogue between Bellamy and a depraved parishioner, in which the latter sounds for all the world like Pangloss, and Bellamy, like the befuddled Candide. Nevertheless, the bulk of Bellamy's thought can be traced back to Edwards alone.

The paradox of Bellamy's thought, and perhaps of the whole "New Divinity" is the fact that reason plays so large a part in it. Bellamy was searching for the Calvinist God of his fathers, but found instead a Constitutional Monarch, a God Who "does not make his foreknowledge of events the rule of his conduct; but the reason and fitness of things." In fact, Bellamy's God was something of a fanatic about order. He had "rather the whole system of intelligent creatures should be in hell to all eternity, than do the very least thing that is in itself unfit and wrong." Bellamy's scheme of theology was attacked at the time in Scotland as redolent with "fantastical unmeaning terms--the nature of things, moral fitness, the true taste or moral sense, with much more such affected cant. . .He carries them so far as to prescribe law to the Almighty, and dictate

[17]Frank Hugh Foster describes Bellamy's interpretation of the Atonement as original and "epoch-making." A Genetic History of the New England Theology (Chicago, 1907), p. 113ff.

with assurance what he may do. . . ."[18]

Yet Bellamy had a profound distrust of reason. He seems to have been convinced by Hume's argument that we cannot trust our sense to give us truth, and concluded that "if we have no evidence of the existence of a Creator--if we are not warranted to believe our Senses, we can believe nothing . . .on Humes Scheme it is all delusion. . . ." Of course, he asserted, "Hume was a fool, said in his heart, no God", but he had demonstrated that "The increase of human Learning, Shew, the Necessity of Divine Revelation & of the internal influences of the holy Spirit--the present External Means of instruction in the Christian world will not do--a carnal mind will not believe, neither natural nor revealed religion."[19]

Although most of Bellamy's theology was second-hand, his dogmatism, his ability to misrepresent an opponent's argument, his patience in hunting down seeming inconsistencies, and above all his energy in turning out words, made him a power in the land, and a strong arm in the cause he favored.[20]

Bellamy's most important work, True Religion Delineated, published in 1750, with a preface by Jonathan Edwards, enjoyed

[18]Webster, p. 629.

[19]Bellamy to Stephen West, 29 September, 1783, Park Family MSS, Yale University.

[20]Bellamy made Bethlehem a sort of New Divinity Seminary. See Percy Eggleston, A Man of Bethlehem (New London, 1908).

a considerable reputation into the next century, and must be regarded as a cornerstone of the New Divinity.[21] In it Bellamy does not directly deal with the communion controversy, but it is easy enough to discover Bellamy's pure church assumptions in this work.

The essence of "True Religion," according to Bellamy, is a sincere compliance with the Gospel command to love God and to love our neighbor. In order to truly love our neighbor, or even ourself, it is necessary first to love God. But to love God we must know Him, as He really is. "A mere speculative knowledge of God, will not, cannot, beget a sense of his beauty in being what he is, when there is naturally no disposition in our hearts to account him glorious in being such. . . ." God is the moral Governor of the universe, and a natural man can look upon Him only as the Just God Who condemns sinners. Therefore, "heart" religion, or conversion, is necessary in order to truly know the glory of God's justice, and to love Him for being Just.

Conversion is an arbitrary act of God. Because our corrupt human nature hates God's justice, conversion "must

[21]An amusing evidence of this book's influence upon Bellamy's reputation comes from the Presbyterian church in New York. One of the members of that church, John Long, regarded it as miraculous that the church was so agreed upon settling Bellamy, since 9/10 of the church had never heard of Bellamy until he came there to preach. But for his book, True Religion Delineated, Long added, 19/20 of the New York congregation would not have heard of Bellamy. Long to the Bethlehem congregation, 5 June, 1754, Bellamy Papers, Yale U..

be irresistible and supernatural." Conversion once begun must culminate successfully. The minister does have a role to play in conversion, however. Bellamy gives the following example:[22]

> "Suppose a creature loved God with all his heart, but after a while begins to feel his love abate, and an aversion to God secretly creeping into his soul; now, perhaps, he might easily suppress and overcome it: but if he gives way to it, until he loses all sense of God's glory. . .it may be quite impossible ever to recover himself."

As the sinner's heart becomes hardened, it becomes correspondingly more difficult for him to be regenerated, because God is a God of order and it is against His nature to do something which is "unfit." The minister's function, therefore, is to create the preconditions from which a conversion would not be unfit. Bellamy's idea of the proper preparation for conversion was to create a state of despair in the sinner.

> "There is nothing more difficult in the whole work preparatory to conversion," he said, "than to make the sinner see, and feel, and own, that it is just, quite just, altogether just and fair, for God to damn him. . . ." When the sinner "comes in a clear and realizing manner, to see and feel the whole truth, viz., that he does not care for God, nor desire to, but is really an enemy to him in his very heart, and voluntarily so, and that all his fair pretences and promises, prayers and tears, are but mere hypocrisy, arising only from self-love, and guilty fears, and mercenary hopes, NOW the business is done.[23]

[22] Works, I, 155.

[23] Works, I, 159.

What business? Conversion? Not at all, but the work of the minister is finished. This remained the function of the minister in the thought of the New Divinity, although later there would be greater emphasis put upon the necessity of the sinner's striving to enter Heaven. The best description of the message is that of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "rungless ladder."[24]

Bellamy's idea of the proper preparation for conversion is consistent only with a pure church system, for if the entire work of preparation consists in reducing the sinner to despair, then only those means can be employed which will achieve that result. Clearly, a hell-fire sermon is appropriate, and just as clearly, the Lord's Supper, a sacrament designed to comfort its recipients, is not.

Bellamy's belief that men could play no part in their actual conversion led logically to his belief that mankind were sharply divided into just two groups--a premise necessary to the pure church. There are no degrees of sin in Bellamy's system. Every sin is infinitely evil, and every act of the unregenerate is a sin. For those who worried that such a doctrine would discourage the unregenerate and

[24]She compared the road to Heaven to a ladder, and described Samuel Hopkins as having knocked out all but the uppermost rung, "and then, pointing to its hopeless splendor, said to the world, 'Go up thither and be saved!'" Quoted in Richard D. Birdsall, "Ezra Stiles versus the New Divinity Men," American Quarterly, XVII (1965), p. 253.

turn them into anti-social behavior, Bellamy added the canny assurance that "if sinners are but effectually awakened to see how dreadful damnation is. . .a bare who can tell? will make such resolve to. . .strive, and beg, and pray, till they die. . . ."[25] Besides, God was wise enough to implant in every man such qualities as humor, compassion and modesty, so that the unregenerate would perform "materially" good acts anyway. The pure church was not incompatible with social stability.

Finally, Bellamy affirms in this work the proposition that saints have subjective assurance of their regeneration, and that saints know other saints to be so. "The godly man feels. . .a peculiar love to the children of God, for that image of God which he sees in them."[26] While such assurance is never infallible, Bellamy gives the impression that most of the members of a church will be regenerate where "true" saints examine applicants. Thus, while Bellamy does not directly discuss the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in his most important work, it is obvious that he assumes both the feasibility and orthodoxy of the pure church.

Bellamy's direct defense of the pure church began in 1759, when Moses Mather published a treatise on The Visible Church in Covenant with God. Bellamy answered in 1760 with

[25] Works, I, 225.

[26] Works, I, 249.

a two-hundred page essay, proving That There Is But One Covenant. In this year also, he drafted a Letter to Scripturista, in reply to an attack by William Hart, one of the Dana faction. Hart had attacked the necessity of a communicant's professing a code of orthodoxy (of human composure) before being allowed to become a full member of the church.[27]

In 1769 Bellamy began a long controversy over the Communion question in a series of dialogues between a parishioner and his minister. Bellamy's first effort was immediately answered by Nathaniel Taylor in A Second Dialogue, in which the minister--Bellamy--was shown his errors. Ebenezer Devotion also took up the parishioner's side with A Dialogue. . .Continued, in which the parishioner paid a second visit to Bellamy and refuted his arguments. Bellamy replied to Devotion by having the parishioner come in for a third visit, where he was again convinced that a sincere profession of grace was necessary for admission to the Lord's Supper, and full communion necessary for the baptism of one's children. Devotion again took charge of the parishioner, had him study the point, and returned him again to Bellamy's study where the parishioner won another victory. By this time it was becoming difficult to enumerate how many times the parishioner had come to visit his minister. Bellamy

[27]Moses Mather, The Visible Church in Covenant With God (New York, 1759); Bellamy, Works, III, 123-202, 371-392.

answered Devotion in another dialogue in which the minister pointed out The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way Covenant, and Yet Retaining the Half-Way-Practice. Devotion in 1770 added another dialogue, but this time the parishioner made his point in a letter. Bellamy answered with a dialogue which brought the controversy "to a point." Wishful thinking! Devotion immediately had the parishioner write a Second Letter, to the Reverend Joseph Bellamy. At the same time Moses Mather attacked the pure church with his Visible Church, In Covenant With God; Further Illustrated. Bellamy answered Mather in A Careful and Strict Examination of the External Covenant, to which Mather replied in 1772.[28]

[28]Bellamy, The Half-Way Covenant, A Dialogue (New Haven, 1769); Nathaniel Taylor, A Second Dialogue, Between A Minister and His Parishioner (Hartford, 1769); Ebenezer Devotion, The Half-Way Covenant, A Dialogue Between Joseph Bellamy, D.D., And a Parishioner, Continued (New London, 1769); Bellamy's reply in Works, III, 413-425; Devotion, The Parishioner, Having Studied the Point (Hartford, 1769); Bellamy, The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way Covenant, and Yet Retaining the Half-Way-Practice (New Haven, [1769?]); Devotion, A Letter to the Reverend Joseph Bellamy, D.D. Concerning Qualifications For Christian Communion (New Haven, 1770); Bellamy, The Sacramental Controversy Brought to a Point (New Haven, [1770]). Devotion, Second Letter, to the Reverend Joseph Bellamy, D.D. (New Haven, [1770]). Moses Mather, The Visible Church In Covenant With God; Further Illustrated (New Haven, 1770); Bellamy, A Careful and Strict Examination of the External Covenant (New Haven, [1770]); Mather, A Brief View of the Manner In Which the Controversy About Terms of Communion Has Been Conducted (New Haven, 1772).

The above is the correct sequence, but there is some confusion about these works of Bellamy in the only edition of his collected Works. The editor attributed Taylor's Second Dialogue to Bellamy--even though Taylor took a Stoddardean position and contradicted all of Bellamy's points. The editor made this error because at the beginning

The arguments employed in the sacramental controversy are best treated in a topical, rather than a chronological manner. Neither side developed new arguments or insights over the years; in fact, the debate did not pass the stage at which Solomon Stoddard and the Mathers had left it around 1700.

There were four arenas in which the disputants fought. The first, and probably to contemporaries the most important, was Scripture. The second was what might be called Tradition or Authority--the consensus of Protestant thought, and most especially, the practices of the New England fathers. The third was Reason--the nature of man and of the universe, and the last was Expediency--the practical consequences of either the Stoddardean or Edwardian communion.

In arguing from Scripture, the Stoddardeans maintained that God had instituted a national church in His

of Bellamy's second pamphlet in this series, the minister and parishioner are sitting down to a third visit. It is obvious, however, that Bellamy counted Devotion's Dialogue Continued as the second visit of the parishioner to his minister. Bellamy seems to have completely ignored Taylor's essay. Bellamy's third pamphlet, The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way-Covenant... was excluded from the collected Works because the editor knew Bellamy had written four dialogues, and with Taylor's included, one of Bellamy's had to be excluded. It would be easier to desert the Works in this exchange and go to the original publications, but unfortunately Bellamy's second effort, his reply to Devotion's Dialogue Continued is not included in the American Bibliography, and I have been unable to even discover what its title was. I will use the Works only for this dialogue, which is listed as Dialogue III, but is in reality Bellamy's second dialogue.

covenant with Abraham, that "grand charter of the Visible church."[29] Every Jew was a member of this church through the ritual of circumcision, and every circumcised person was later admitted to the Passover. Because the Jews were by and large a hard-hearted people, there must have been many sinners present at the Passover, yet God never condemned such a "mixed" participation. The Jewish church, continued this argument, was a "type" of the latter Christian church. The Hebrew tribes prefigured the "visible saints" of New England, a people holy because of their mission, not because they were all "real" saints. Circumcision obviously stood for baptism and only baptism was a prerequisite for attendance upon the Lord's Supper--the Christian Passover.

Closely related to this interpretation of the Old Testament, was the Stoddardean belief that there were two covenants, or at least two aspects of the covenant of grace.[30] There was an external covenant, and an internal

[29]Ross, A Plain Address, p. 9 footnote.

[30]Bellamy pointed out there was some confusion about the use of the term "external covenant." By it, "some mean the Covenant of grace, externally exhibited by God in his word, and externally complied with in a profession of godliness." This definition was pure church and many church covenants admitted persons into the covenant of grace, "both in its internal and external privileges." But others use the term "external covenant" to "mean a covenant requiring only external obedience, in distinction from heart-holiness." These latter, according to Bellamy, really believed in two covenants, one of which was a graceless covenant. Bellamy, The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way-Covenant..., pp. 9-10.

covenant. The external covenant, in regard to the ancient Hebrews, implied only a superficial obedience to the Law. So long as the Jews performed this duty outwardly, they fulfilled the external covenant, and received special favors from God, such as victory in battle. So also, in the Christian Church, there was an external covenant, which included the Lord's Supper, and which could be complied with on a superficial, non-gracious level. While obedience to the external covenant in an unregenerate way was not meritorious such obedience did gain favor from God.

Bellamy pointed out in his rebuttal that "in this controversy, gentlemen on [the other] side of the question are wont to argue abundantly from the old testament dispensation."[31] However, Bellamy found it easy enough to refute such arguments. He denied that the term "Abraham's seed" included the whole Jewish nation, for as Paul tells us, "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly. . .but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." Abraham was regenerate when God made the compact with him, and Abraham sincerely professed to believe in God and to obey His commandments--namely to separate from the idolatrous world. Circumcision was a later seal of this covenant of grace, and all those Jews who in the future offered up their children to be

[31]Bellamy, The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way-Covenant..., p. 2.

circumcised must be understood as professing a sincere love of God, since they are professing to be children of Abraham. Since only the regenerate can sincerely love God, it follows that the Jews were professing conversion in the act of circumcision. No doubt, many of the Jews were hypocrites, professing a love they could not possibly feel, but the point Bellamy wants to make is that the prerequisite for circumcision was a profession of grace. God was content to judge the Jewish church in its external form and He publicly endorsed it upon several occasions despite its mixed communion. But God expected better of the Christian church, which has had greater light, and He would not tolerate the hypocrisy He winked at in Biblical times.[32]

Bellamy's interpretation of circumcision could easily be extended to cover the Passover, which Bellamy neglected. But the fact that God expected unregenerate Jews to partake of the Passover was recognized as "Mr. Stoddard's topping Argument" by one of Edwards' friends, Rev. Edward Billing, who proceeded to show that the Passover was not a "type" of the Lord's Supper after all. The Jewish nation was merely celebrating an historical event. Billing's argument makes manifest the futility of any discussion based upon typological interpretation of the Bible, for what is a "type" to one man, is simply an historical event to another,

[32]Bellamy, Works, III, 137-139.

and vice versa. Billing realized this in arguing that the Jewish church be dropped from the discussion since it proved, if anything, too much. Not even scandalous sinners were excluded from full membership.[33]

Billing's advice was unheeded. Only the Baptists and Separatists, as represented by Isaac Backus, were willing to state that with the coming of Christ, the old national church of the Jews had been replaced by a new covenant in which only the regenerate had a share.[34] Bellamy, and probably the vast majority of Congregationalists, preferred to think of the Christian Church as a continuation of the Hebrew Church. The New England saints remained the "true Jews" and a chosen people. Furthermore, each side in the controversy realized that Scripture was the end-all of any argument, and everyone seems to have been convinced that Scripture spoke out clearly for his own view of the matter. Bellamy even believed that the Half-Way Covenant was explicitly condemned in Numbers.[35]

As for the New Testament, the controversy centered

[33]Billing, p. 65.

[34]Backus, Letter to Benjamin Lord, p. 22ff.

[35]Bellamy, The Inconsistence of Renouncing the Half-Way Covenant..., p. 1. He referred to Numbers 9:10: "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin."

about various parables, the actual institution of the sacrament by Christ at the Last Supper, and the practice of the apostolic church. The two most discussed parables were the story of the wedding feast and the unprepared guest, and the story of the wheat and the tares.[36] In this latter parable, as the reader will recall, an enemy has sown tares among a great man's wheat. When the two begin to grow together, the great man's servants propose to weed out the tares. They are instructed by their master to allow the wheat and tares to grow together until the harvest, at which time the tares will be burned. The argument of the Stoddardeans, of course, was that the tares were the unregenerate, who must be allowed to remain in communion with the elect until the Last Judgement, at which time God Himself will separate the wheat and the chaff. The story of the wedding feast is similar in substance. The King, having been ignored by the guests he originally invited to the feast (the Jews), sends his servants (the apostles) to the cross-roads to invite strangers (the Gentiles) to the party. One of these strangers comes to the feast without the proper garment (he is unregenerate) and is thrown out. The point is, that all had been invited; it is only on the Last Day that the

[36]The best single treatment of this parable was John Cotton's The Separation of the Tares and Wheat Reserved to the Day of Judgment (Boston, 1747). This is the great-grandson of the John Cotton.

unregenerate will be driven away from the elect.

It was child's play to destroy these arguments. True, the harvest, or the ejection of the unprepared guest, would take place at the Second Coming, but the tares to be destroyed at that time were the hypocrites who had entered the church under false pretenses. Bellamy asked, who, after all, had sown the tares, if not the devil? Are we then commanded by God to do the devil's work? Or when God sends His apostles to the cross-roads, does He intend them to invite persons who will come in a slovenly manner to the feast? By no means. The unprepared guest accepted the invitation in seeming good grace and hoodwinked the King's servants. Hypocrites will enter the church despite the most careful examination. This is no reason to drop the examination.[37]

As for the sacrament itself, the Stoddardeans argued that it was a "sort of an abiding sermon. . .declaring the death of Christ. . . ."[38] Every Christian must partake of the sacrament in order to "declare our testimony to all who observe us that we really believe that Christ died to save sinners. . . ."[39] In this sense, the sacrament was the same sort of profession of belief that a recitation of a creed

[37] Works, III, 418.

[38] Benjamin Wadsworth, A Dialogue Between A Minister and His Neighbor (Boston, 1772), pp. 21, 80. This is the second edition of a work first published in 1724.

[39] Billing, p. 51.

represents, and required no more than an "historical" faith that Jesus Christ had really been the Son of God and had died for sinners upon the Cross.

The Edwardians argued that the Lord's Supper was a "significative Ordinance."[40] It was a seal of the covenant of grace, by which God testified to the world that here was His elect. Therefore, only those actually regenerated could rightfully come to the Supper. Bellamy pointed out that while Christ had poured out His blood "for many" at the Last Supper, He did so "for the remission of sins." It is the many whose sins were forgiven whom Jesus commanded to repeat His actions.

The argument once advanced by Solomon Stoddard that the Lord's Supper was a means of conversion seems to have fallen into disrepute, probably because it approached too closely the Roman Catholic view of the sacraments. The best that was said about the converting power of the Communion was that it was a means of increasing assurance in the communicant, but this presupposed that the communicant was in a state of grace. Although the Stoddardeans had given up any claim that the Lord's Supper could effect conversion, the Edwardians continued to rebuke them for this error. The Edwardians continually pointed out that their view of the

[40] Works, III, 166.

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sacrament was "Protestant".

What actually happened on that last Passover celebrated by Jesus was a matter of intense concern for both sides in the sacramental controversy, but what seems most odd is that the argument never deviated from the topic of a pure church. For example, the question of whether Judas, the unregenerate, was allowed to eat the bread distributed by Jesus, was discussed fully, but all of the sixteenth century controversies about the words "This is my body" were completely ignored.

There were various facets of the apostolic church which proved something to either side in the controversy. Mention of one will perhaps suffice. The Stoddardeans pointed out that on Pentecost, in a single day, three thousand persons were admitted into the church. Surely the few apostles present simply did not have the time to hear and judge professions of experience. The apostles baptized everyone that day who was willing to profess a mere historical faith in the Messiah. Since most of these converts were adults, baptism was equivalent to full church membership.

This argument was handled by Bellamy, who replied that Peter had called upon the crowd to "repent," and then, "be baptized." Anyone who desired baptism was therefore professing his repentance, which to be real must be part of a true conversion. The apostles were able to exercise considerable Christian charity in their judgement that day,

because to ask for baptism then, was "to join with a persecuted party, whose master had lately been put to a most shameful and scandalous death, in the most public occasion, at the risk of every thing dear to them in the world." Today, Bellamy continued, times have changed. "It is esteemed no small honour to be church members, and enjoy church privileges."[41] Therefore, the examination of members must be more rigid, as more hypocrites apply for membership.

From the Bible, the argument proceeded to Tradition. Bellamy admitted to a general ignorance of the early Reformers and never indulged in the piling up of quotations from various Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[42] I will therefore restrict this discussion to the New England fathers, where the Edwardians were able to inflict real damage upon the Stoddardeans.

It was indisputable that the first settlers of New England had practiced a pure church. The Stoddardeans had little choice but to rebuke their hallowed ancestors.

> "The fathers of the New England churches, having seen and experienced much of the corruptions of the visible churches at home, were very desirous of founding pure churches here; and in their zeal (commendable in its roots, I presume, tho' not in all its fruits)

[41] Works, III, 184.

[42] Bellamy, Remarks on the Reverend Mr. Croswell's Letter to the Reverend Mr. Cumming (Boston, 1763), p. 20; Bellamy to A. Cumming, 18 May, 1763, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

made some things terms of communion which they had no sufficient warrant for."[43]

It was impossible for the Stoddardeans to find comfort in the fact that some of the founders were involved in the innovation of the Half-Way covenant, because most of the Stoddardeans were as opposed to the Half-Way practice as the Edwardians were. Moses Mather, William Hart, Robert Ross, the front-line of the Stoddardean regiment, wanted all Christians to come to the Lord's Supper. The Half-Way Covenant was for them an illogical compromise and an evasion of the duty to come to the Communion table. Thus, the Stoddardeans were trapped by history. They could not urge, as the Edwardians did, a return to the pristine state of the fathers. They had to point ahead into the unforeseeable future, to a better time, where the mistakes of the first generation would not be perpetuated.

To fully appreciate the difficulties of the Stoddardean position, we must realize that it was much harder to speak out for a divorce from the traditions of the founders in 1770 than it had been in Solomon Stoddard's day. In the intensifying struggle for colonial rights, Americans were beginning to rediscover the heroic age when:[44]

[43]Hart, A Scriptural Answer, p. 78.

[44]Thomas Jefferson and John Dickinson, Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, July, 1775, Second Continental Congress.

> "Our forefathers, inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, left their native land, to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom. At the expense of their blood, at the hazard of their fortunes, without the least charge to the country from which they removed, by unceasing labor, and an unconquerable spirit, they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike nations of barbarians."

In Connecticut, congregations were often reminded of the famous first generation, as at Litchfield, where one minister gave in 1770, A Brief View of the Distresses, Hardships and Dangers Our Ancestors Encounter'd In Settling New England--The Privileges We Enjoy, and Our Obligations Thence Arising; With Moral Reflections Thereupon.[45]

The Edwardians fully accepted the view of New England's history current at the time. The fathers had set up a pure church, served God, and all was well. As they passed away, a less devout generation began to shrug off the divine mission. The Half-Way covenant was introduced, but those great saints involved in this innovation had intended no compromise with a wicked world, for they fully expected to restrict baptism to children of "real saints" who were not assured enough of their own state to come to the sacrament of Communion. Though these saints had "scruples" about their own conversion, they were to be real saints in the eyes of the congregation.[46] In time, the Half-Way Covenant was

[45]Judah Champion (Hartford, 1770).

[46]Bellamy, Works, III, 395.

corrupted and led to the deplorable mess in which everyone found Connecticut in 1770. Persons became Half-Way members automatically whenever they had a child to be baptized. The records of the churches confirm the sarcastic remark of one Edwardian that, in the Half-Way churches, "nothing induces a Man or Woman to join the Church, like marrying...." One could expect them nine months later, he remarked, or even earlier.[47]

It was impossible to reform the Half-Way covenant in the present conditions, according to the Edwardians, because there were too many unregenerated persons in the churches. Nobody cared if the applicant for the Half-Way covenant had any grace; the whole practice was designed for the convenience of easy-minded hypocrites. The Stoddardean communion was seen only as the Half-Way covenant writ large, and it was predicted that such a practice would bring about a fatal decline of religion in New England. The only solution, said the Edwardians, was to go back to the original ways of New England, and to hope for a speedy coming of the Last Day.

History also worked for the pure church in the increasing reputation the world began to bestow upon Jonathan Edwards. When he was ejected from Northampton in 1750, Edwards was not yet the figure of great importance he was by 1800. It was only after 1750 that his major works were

[47]Billing, p. 7.

published--such as his Freedom of the Will, Original Sin, Nature of True Virtue, The Work of Redemption. It was these works that made Edwards more than a provincial observer of local revivals. His years at Stockbridge were well-spent, and his "school" received the reflected glory that Edwards earned. Bellamy revered his intimate association with Edwards and was quick to defend him from attacks. When Moses Mather complained that Edwards' Treatise on Religious Affections had a "surprisingly" wide influence in Connecticut, Bellamy rejoined stoutly, "Yes, and always will. . .in proportion as true religion revives and spreads."[48]

The historical argument was favorable to the Edwardians, but the arguments based upon Reason seem to have been the strongest ground of the Stoddardeans. These late eighteenth-century Stoddardeans preached an optimistic view of human nature. Man is never so totally lost that he loses all desire to reconcile with God. Man's self-love, which caused his fall, can be instrumental in effecting his recovery. Ministers should emphasize God's mercy and love; ministers must urge men to strive for Heaven, with the assurance that God is likely to reward such endeavors--even though such "works" strictly speaking cannot save one. The unregenerate are to be encouraged to attend all the means

[48] Works, III, 368.

of grace, and the Lord's Supper especially, which is the greatest sermon on the love of God. Moreover, the Stoddardeans argued, the world is not divided between the saints and sinners. Conversion is a gradual growth in grace, and there are gradations in the amount of grace different men have. Conversely, not all men are equally depraved. "For example," Jedidiah Mills, one of the Stoddardean ministers, pointed out, "suppose A and B are favour'd with equal degrees of light and suppose B has three degrees of strength of bias and inclination to sin, more than A, which there can be no reasonable doubt may be the case; can it once be doubted here, whether B is more vile and odious in God's sight than A sinning against the same degree of light?" Furthermore, sinners can, of their own efforts, improve their moral condition. "I appeal to the common sense of mankind," Mills cried out, "What! is there no possibility that the drunkard, the thief, the liar, the profane swearer, the adulterer, the murderer and blasphemer should become, on the whole, less vicious in God's sight <u>while unregenerate</u>, by reforming all this atrocious wickedness, tho' on no higher principle than that of natural conscience, awakened by the common influences of the spirit . . .?"[49]

[49]Jedidiah Mills, <u>An Inquiry Concerning the State of the Unregenerate</u> (New Haven, 1767), pp. 16-17. Emphasis mine. Moses Mather, <u>The Visible Church..,Further Illustrated</u>, Sections I and II.

The idea that every act of an unregenerate person was infinitely evil was manifestly absurd. One Stoddardean asked his opponents facetiously, "Why don't you go about and warn those of your Neighbours, you look upon to be unconverted against Plowing?"[50] The Stoddardean appeal to common sense must have carried great weight at the time. It was reinforced by a common assumption that there were degrees of punishment in Hell. But if that were so, there must be degrees in sin, and so, degrees in grace.

Where Bellamy took up this question, his argument sounds quite feeble. He refused to give up the "traditional" doctrine of the total depravity of man, which to him meant that the unconverted person always acted from a sinful spirit in everything he did. Bellamy did make one qualification. While "the least sin may be an infinite evil. . .yet all sins may not be equally heinous: for there is as great a difference among infinites, as among finites." He proves this incredible statement by giving the example of the sufferings of Hell, which are eternal for all, but not equally intense.[51] Therefore, he concluded, the unregenerate sin by attending sermons, but sin even more by not attending. What his position comes down to is that all acts of an

[50]Ross, A Plain Address, p. 86.

[51]Works, I, 104 footnote.

unregenerate person are infinitely evil, but some acts are less infinitely evil than others. In this manner, Bellamy paid obeisance to common sense. Bellamy was further willing to admit that there were gradations among the elect. "There are among men. . .souls of various sizes," he explains. God created men with different capacities, and commanded each to love Him to the fullest extent possible. All those saints in Heaven love God fully, but some of them love God more than others.[52] Despite these qualifications, however, Bellamy maintained a strong belief in a polarized universe.

The Stoddardeans had a more appealing view of God. Bellamy admitted as much when he attacked the "charming" sort of religion that comforted the unregenerate with such phrases as: "the best have their failings; no man is perfect; I endeavor to be sincere; the best have their doubts; assurance is not to be attained." People, he complained, naturally loved those ministers who cried Peace, Peace, when there was not Peace.[53] To Bellamy and to the New Divinity, God was not an indulgent Father, looking down with gratitude at our feeble efforts to please Him. Time and time again in Bellamy's writings, breaking through the

[52] Works, I, 143-144, 147.

[53] Works, I, 116-117.

patina of scholastic reasoning inherited from Jonathan Edwards, Bellamy's God emerges in all His awful and incomprehensible glory. This is the God Who created the universe for His own end, which has nothing whatever to do with the happiness of man. We cannot possibly hope to understand God, much less to judge Him. "It is infinite imprudence for a worm of the dust to dislike. . .his conduct, and find fault with his dispensations."[54]

The God of the New Divinity was the fierce, avenging and rather murderous Deity of the type one finds in the Books of Samuel. There were many among Bellamy's contemporaries who believed that such a God was dead and ready for interment. Charles Chauncy warned his Calvinist opponents that the future would judge between two concepts of God:[55]

> "The God to whom you pay your religious homage, who needs the introduction of sin and misery, in order to illustrate His own character, and display His divine perfections," and the God to whom "I bow my knee. . .a Power intrinsically excellent, who can shine without contrast, whose glory is immutable, and who would be the admiration of His creatures, even were guilt and suffering banished the universe. You expect to look down from Heaven upon numbers of wretched objects, confined in the Pit of Hell, and blaspheming their Creator forever. I hope to see the prison-doors opened, and to hear those tongues which are now prophaning the name of God, chaunting His praise. In one word, you imagine the Divine Glory will be advanced by immortalizing sin and misery: I, by exterminating both natural and moral

[54] Works, I, 88.

[55] Quoted in Moses Coit Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution (New York, 1897), II, 282.

> evil, and by introducing universal happiness. Which of our systems is best supported, let reason and Scripture determine."

For over a century to come, most people in New England would prefer the New Divinity, and it became a commonplace observation that the "hard sayings" of predestination, total depravity and the Everlasting Bonfire were the most popular themes of the revivals of the nineteenth century.

The practical consequences of either scheme of communion were discussed in the most general terms. The Stoddardeans warned that the pure church would leave nearly everyone in Connecticut unbaptized. They gave various estimates of the proportion of communicants to the total population, but all of these estimates were derived from general impressions. Thus, Robert Ross gave his opinion that communicants "are often not a quarter part of the church, and sometimes not above a tenth."[56] To make admission to the Table even harder would only intensify the problem.

In reply, Bellamy answered that it was better New England were 90% unchurched, rather than pervert Scripture. Having made this heroic defiance, Bellamy came down to earth and argued that even though the Communion was closed to the unregenerate, the church would still watch over such persons, and they would still be obliged to attend the Gospel.

[56]Ross, A Plain Address, p. 34.

Through this means, the work of conversion would be carried on. Besides, the Stoddardean scheme would not solve the problem, because "Gospel discipline never was, and never will be maintained by ungospel churches."[57]

In the last resort, Bellamy fell back upon his faith in the imminence of the Millennium.[58] Once that happened, there would be at least 1,000 years, and perhaps as many as 360,000 years of extraordinary grace. Even if at the present time "not one in ten thousand have been saved," he assured his readers, in the time of the Millennium, when peace and plenty shall prevail, the population will increase explosively, everyone will be saved who is born in that period, so that in the long run "it may yet come to pass, that by far the greatest part of mankind may be saved." Bellamy calculated that the ratio of saved to damned would be at least 17,476¼ to 1. Bellamy put the expected date of the Second Coming somewhere between 1866 and 2016, but he admitted to some doubts about his conclusions. What mattered was that the Millennium was coming, and that it would solve all problems. Little wonder that Edwards' Humble Attempt "to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people, in extraordinary prayer, for the

wild!

[57] Works, III, 420.

[58] His ideas were best expressed in his sermon on that topic, Works, I, 495-516.

revival of Religion and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, pursuant to Scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time" received such attention from the New Divinity. For the Edwardians, the Second Coming was a veritable deus ex machina; it saved them from facing the difficult problem of the church's role in a society which seemed basically unregenerate. Because of their firm belief in the speedy coming of a Last Day, the Edwardians were able to argue that it was the sole duty of the church to guard the communion table, in order to preserve the purity of that remnant whom Christ had redeemed. In essence, the Edwardians had given up on the world. There was no reason to think that God would bless Connecticut with another revival until the Latter Days. Bellamy's correspondence is filled with accounts of revivals here and there, and we feel in each instance that Bellamy and his correspondent are holding their breath. Perhaps this is the signal, perhaps the curve of grace has now turned upward. And then the world goes on in its unregenerate way, and we hear a slight sigh of disappointment, and renewed petitions to God to hasten the Millennium.

Bellamy's defense of the pure church did not commit him to Separatism, nor even to the voluntary type of church the Separatists were demanding. Bellamy had been an outspoken enemy to the Strict Congregationalists; he considered all Separatists as damned in 1750 and there is no reason to

think he ever changed that opinion.[59] Nevertheless, after 1770, Bellamy had much occasion to ponder the worth of a Standing Order. A former parishioner wrote to him in 1770 from Saybrook where the pastor, William Hart, was preaching "that it is the indisputable Duty of all Morral Honest Persons to come to the Table of the Lord's Supper Grace or no Grace. . . ." The Parishioner wanted to know if he should separate from Hart.[60] While no answer is recorded, and perhaps none was written, it must have tempted Bellamy to condone a separation in this case, involving as it did a minister Bellamy had tangled with and whose doctrines Bellamy despised. Even more pointed was a letter Bellamy received in 1779 from an unlicensed preacher whom Bellamy had rebuked. "Is it possible," this fellow answered, "according to the Constitution and practice of the churches, with which you are in Communion, as the world now is, for a Minister of the Gospel to Settle over any particular church without being put to the disagreeable Necessity of gaining more Votes for his Settlement out of the Visible Kingdom of the Devil, than the Visible Kingdom of Christ?"[61] Bellamy's

[59]Hoz. Odell to Bellamy, 8 February, 1750, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

[60]Simon Hough to Bellamy, 16 January, 1770, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

[61]E. Bradford to Bellamy, 15 July, [17]79, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

answer, although again not preserved, would have had to be negative. Bellamy himself had had to go to the Visible Kingdom of the Devil, that is, the society meeting at Bethlehem in 1764 to ask for a raise in his salary. Before this unregenerate group Bellamy had to plead his financial need in a most humble manner, frankly admitting his fear that "dreadful consequences" to the peace of the church might result from his request. After a mild uproar Bellamy was given a raise, but not as much as he had asked for.[62] The idea of voluntary subscriptions must have seemed a little more attractive after that experience.

That Bellamy's attitude toward the Standing Order was in the process of change is indicated by an incident that took place in 1770. The church at Sharon threatened that year to secede from the Litchfield County Association because of a sermon Bellamy had preached on the pure church. At the time the Litchfield Association was wracked by internal conflict and Sharon's secession could conceivably have destroyed the Association altogether. At this point, Bellamy proclaimed: "I mean to break with those who give up the Covenant of Grace, & Substitute a graceless Covenant in its room--But I do not mean to break with those who hold to the Covenant of Grace, altho they differ in some Sentiments &

[62]Bellamy to the Society of Bethlem, 8 March, 1764, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

practices from me."[63] From Edwards to Bellamy, it had been believed and hoped by many ministers within the established churches that a state church could be a pure church. Bellamy, like many other such ministers, was finally beginning to decide that purity was more important than establishment.

[63]Bellamy to Reverend Smith of Sharon, 8 March, 1770, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

Chapter VII

THE PURE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

In the same month that the United States won her independence, in January, 1783, the aged and infirm pastor of the Congregational church at Bloomfield, Connecticut was laid to rest. The Reverend Hezekiah Bissell had been born in 1711 in East Windsor and had graduated Yale in 1733. He became pastor at Bloomfield in 1738, and served there for forty-five years. In that period he had carried on the old traditions of the New England churches, in which admission to the Lord's Supper was easy, and where the Half-Way covenant was open to all. His era was the pre-Awakening time of Connecticut, but he lived long beyond it. At his death, the church in Bloomfield finally moved into the new day of the pure church.

At Bissell's death, according to one of his successors in 1791, "public opinion [was] undergoing, in many societies, a change. . .excluding all from gospel ordinances, but visible Christians or real communicants." At Bloomfield, "this subject became a matter of much dispute. . .It made it exceedingly difficult to obtain anything like a general union in any candidate" to fill the pulpit. By 1785, however, the Bloomfield church had written a new covenant, requiring a profession of regeneration for admission into the church. "These qualifications were stricter than what the

half way folks. . .were willing to comply with. They considered them as requiring in substance a visible change of heart. So that while things were thus situated there were no admissions into this church of any but professed believers or visible Christians." Moreover, "it became a public question, whether such as had formerly been admitted to covenant in the lax way. . .should any longer have a right to offer their children in baptism. Some were for wholly excluding all of this description from all church privileges . . .but others contended that such, as had already been admitted in this way, were not excluded by the new regulations." The question was resolved the next year when it was voted that the church's covenant was a covenant of grace and that all who entered the church in any way were expected to profess regeneration. The church agreed, somewhat grudgingly, to allow baptism to the children of those persons too scrupulous to come immediately to the Lord's Supper. The pastor opposed this compromise, and used his authority, and "a little prudence," as he tells us, to insure that none "but professed believers, and such as felt a desire to partake of all the ordinances of the gospel" were allowed entry into the church. Finally, in 1793, it was voted that none but full church members, those actually communicants in the church, had the right to have their children baptized. Bloomfield had completed its journey

toward the pure church.[1]

The situation at Bloomfield was typical. By 1800 it had become much more difficult to become a communicant in Connecticut than it had been before 1740. The Stoddardean communion, which had never been dominant, all but disappeared after 1770. If we take the year 1799 and look at the covenants in force at that time, we find that fifty-six of the seventy-three churches, of which it is possible to say something about the requirements for admission, required a profession of real sainthood as a prerequisite to admission. In a random sample of the nineteenth century, I found twelve covenants, all very clearly pure church. The evidence is indisputable that after the Great Awakening the open communion went into decline, and that this decline became steeper with each decade. Before 1770 the ratio of pure to open churches was about three to two. In the decade of the 1770's thirteen new churches were established; every one of them required a profession of grace. In the same period, five churches, like Bloomfield, finally joined the trend toward the pure church by making admissions harder. By 1800 the ratio of pure to open churches was four to one.

The figures above, compiled through a close examination of 80% of the extant church records, demonstrate that

[1]Bloomfield (Wintonbury), Records, II, 33-63, "A church history by Rev. William Miller."

there can be no doubt that the Edwardian idea of the church was the dominant one in Connecticut at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The great clerical figures of the turn of the century were all loyal to the pure church concept. When Nathaniel Emmons, for example, was examined before the Hartford South Association in 1769, upon his application for a license to preach, he stated his belief that the Lord's Supper belonged only to those who gave "a credible evidence of inward renewing grace." Furthermore, the candidate for admission must be "satisfied himself, or have a prevailing hope of his good estate." Emmons completely rejected the Half-Way Covenant. It is significant that although there was some opposition to Emmons' ideas during the examination, his views on the qualifications for admission to full communion aroused no protest. Lyman Beecher too defended the pure church in a sermon he preached in 1819. He traced the evolution of the visible church from the patriarchal, through the national, to the final congregational or local stage. This progress terminated clearly in a pure church for, Beecher said, the requisite qualifications for membership in the congregational form of the church were "personal holiness in the sight of God, and a credible profession of holiness before men." Beecher admitted that some hypocrites would enter the church, but if too many did so, the church ceased to be a church of Christ. Timothy Dwight, in his Theology, Explained and Defended, specified three qualifications for admission to

the Lord's Supper. These were: Baptism, "piety," and "a public profession of Religion." While he did not expect complete inner assurance of a saint, Dwight did insist upon "a rational, and preponderating persuasion of. . .sincere piety."[2]

The victory of the pure church was taken for granted by historians in the nineteenth century. Joseph, Tracy, who wrote the first history of the Great Awakening, in 1842, stated that one of the most important results of the revival was the "restoration of the true doctrine concerning church membership." The "true doctrine" was Edwards'. "Will any thinking man pretend," Tracy challenged, "that a well-informed pastor or church member, who has himself been through a series of experiences, and has been acquainted with others during the same process, cannot judge whether his neighbor, in telling his 'experience', is telling what he actually experienced, or is merely reciting a story that he has learned, or a fiction of his own brain?"[3]

Charles Thompson's Times of Refreshing. A History of American Revivals from 1740 to 1877, published in 1877, estimated that the First Awakening had resulted in the conversion of about fifty thousand souls in New England. But,

[2]Edwards A. Park, Memoir of Nathaniel Emmons (Boston, 1861), pp. 38-40; Lyman Beecher, Sermons (Boston, 1852), II, 204-242; Timothy Dwight, Theology, Explained and Defended (London, 1821), V, 379-384.

[3]Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston, 1842), pp. 171, 406, 411.

added Thompson,[4]

> "that is but a superficial estimate, which counts only the converts. There are other fruits broader, deeper, and themselves continually productive. Prominent among these is the higher tone of spiritual life in the church. The preaching of Edwards, Whitefield and Tennent opened the mind of the church of their day to the startling truth that in greater or less measure an unconverted ministry had entered the pulpits and unconverted communicants gathered at the Lord's Table . . .The revival strengthened the various denominations to exact of candidates for the ministry clearer evidence of personal piety, and destroyed the idea that mere knowledge of the catechism, without evidence or profession of regeneration was sufficient qualification for church-membership."

Finally, in 1890, Alexander V. G. Allen, in his biography of Edwards, concluded that the Awakening had given a final blow to "Sacerdotal and sacramental theories. . . ." For Allen, Edwards was "the father of modern Congregationalism."[5]

Edwards' reputation, of course, was tremendous in the nineteenth century, just as it is today. But in the nineteenth century, unlike today, Edwards' ecclesiology was taken seriously. C. C. Goen in 1962 concluded that Edwards' attempt to create a pure church revealed "a curious blindness to history," and went on to wonder "how such a perceptive thinker could advance an argument which immediately preceding generations had proven fallacious."[6] But Sereno

[4]Charles L. Thompson, Times of Refreshing (Chicago, 1877), pp. 64-65.

[5]Allen, pp. 249-250, 263.

[6]Goen, p. 209.

Dwight, writing in 1830, concluded that the only question still unsettled about the pure church was how arguments against it "could have satisfied a man of so much acuteness and worth as Mr. Stoddard."[7] The American Sunday School Union, in its popular biography of Edwards, pointed out that Edwards' dismissal was an act of God, in which the "immediate object of heaven was, by this means, to bring about a thorough examination of a question of vital importance to the church of God." This question was "the Scriptural qualifications for admission to the church." Edwards' apparent failure at Northampton actually created "a powerful reaction, to restore to the church its purity and strictness, both in principle and practice. . . ."[8] Tracy claimed that "every Congregational church in New England, probably, has either adopted Edwards' doctrine, or become Unitarian."[9] To become Unitarian, of course, was a distinct falling off in Tracy's opinion. There was no need in the nineteenth century to assert Edwards' "modernity"; the fact was too clear for argument. Conrad Cherry's excellent recent study of Edwards, which concludes that Edwards was by and large

[7] Sereno Dwight, p. 303 footnote.

[8] [Anon.], Jonathan Edwards (no place, no date, but probably 1832), pp. 83-87.

[9] Tracy, p. 411.

a failure, would have amazed scholars fifty years ago.[10]

By 1800, then, Edwards and the pure church were victorious. There remains only the question as to whether this victory was merely one in name, or if it were a victory in fact. Before 1740 the ideal of the pure church had been by and large maintained in Connecticut, but the practice of admissions had been quite lax. Was this true of the period after the Awakening?

[10]Conrad Cherry, The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal (New York, 1966), pp. 216-217.

As Edwards increased in the nineteenth century, Stoddard decreased. Dwight, above, referred to Stoddard as "a man. . .of worth", and the American Sunday School Union treated him as a Father Adam, venerable despite the miseries he handed down. Their biography of Edwards found it "worthy of observation, that the consequences of Mr. Stoddard's error was visited on his own grandson and family, which is very often the course of God's providence." Stoddard's reputation hit its nadir in the 1846 issue of The New Englander, where Stoddard was attacked personally as a hypocrite, and his system as totally ruinous to true religion. Stoddard was rescued from further infamy only by obscurity. In our own times, Stoddard has made a come-back. Once Americans learned that their intellectual traditions were derived from a frontier pragmatism it was seen that Stoddard rather than Edwards fitted better into the mainstream of American thought. Arthur Mc Giffert in 1932 attributed Edwards' dismissal from Northampton to his own "perfectionism" which made it impossible for Edwards to cope with problems his grandfather had been able to solve. Stoddard had adjusted to a "new social situation" when, according to Mc Giffert, he allowed the unregenerate to join the church. This is generally the line followed by Perry Miller, Edmund Morgan, and various text-books, even if Stoddard himself is not mentioned. On the other hand, Stoddard himself is being studied more closely, if Cherry's work is any indication of trends. He warns that while "much has been made of Solomon Stoddard's pragmatic concerns in opening the Supper," one must not conclude that "Stoddard was first and last concerned with 'numbers' or that he valued a large church more than a church of character."

There are abundant indications that practice was finally made to conform with the ideal. For example, the right of the pastor to examine applicants privately was increasingly abolished, and where it survived, the minister was usually very clearly instructed to look for regeneration before he proposed anyone for admission. The pastor at Wolcott noted in 1777 that the church had voted that "I recommend no person to the communion of this Chh. but those whom I deem, from a judgment of charity, to be persons of grace."[11] At Marlborough in 1798, it was voted that if "any person has a desire to join to this church, he or she may converse with the then-supplying Candidate [the church was still seeking a pastor], and if he is satisfied with their religious knowledge & experience, he may propound them for communion. . . ."[12] Very often, as at Bristol First church, a standing committee was established to assist the pastor "in the examination of candidates for admission."[13] Even more usual was a return to the ancient practice of New England, in which the church members examined the applicant in a spontaneous manner, and then voted to accept or reject. The Preston First church, for example, voted in 1790 that

[11]Wolcott, Records, I, 26.

[12]Marlborough, Records, I, 25.

[13]Bristol First, Records, II, 23.

"all persons desiring admission into this chh. shall previous to their being propounded to full communion, give the members opportunity to converse with them, & examine them respecting their religous qualifications, & motives."[14] Similarly, at North Stonington in 1791, when the church was reorganized, the members were "severally asked to give a reason of the hope that was in them. . .and they gave edifying and satisfactory Relations, of the great things which they trusted God had done for them."[15]

It is evident also that the relation of experience was considered by many as a severe trial, and some churches, as, for example, East Haddam First, made special provisions for those who "thro' Excessive fear" did not wish to face the ordeal. At East Haddam such persons were apparently allowed to speak privately with the pastor, and in such cases the pastor was instructed to examine the applicant's conversion experience.[16]

Another indication that the pure church practice was being implemented was the problem it created in regard to inter-church union. Prior to the Awakening, a communicant moving from one parish to another had little trouble in becoming a full member of his new church. All he had to do

[14]Preston First, Records, I, 95.

[15]North Stonington, Records, II, 6.

[16]East Haddam First, Records, I, 39.

was to present to the new church a letter of dismissal from the old church. But if the pure church was to be seriously practiced it became necessary to investigate the quality of the communion of neighboring churches, and to reject communicants from those churches where the unregenerate were allowed to feed upon the Bread and Wine. This carried with it the potential to destroy once and for all the Standing Order, and to create in Connecticut a real "evangelical union" of independent, voluntary churches. There was, of course, a good deal of hesitancy in following such a course among the established ministry. The church at Lyme adopted, like many churches, a moderate position, when it declared that "Particular Societies of Visible Saints who [under?] Christ their Head are stated and joyned together for ordinary communion with one another. . .are to be owned by each other . . .though Differing in apprehention and Practice in some lesser things." Lyme here adhered to the evangelical union of all real saints, but in the same Confession of Faith, the Lyme church expressed its belief that in the admission of members to full communion, "Different degrees of explicitness in professions should no ways hinder such Churches from owning Each other as Instituted Churches."[17] The church at Montville, concerned lest "False Professors" creep into the church, rewrote its covenant in 1758. In that covenant, the

[17]Lyme, Records, III, 1-5.

church declared "our Readiness to Receive the known members of other Churches of Christ to Occasional Communion. . .upon their Reasonable Desire & Recommendation. further Declaring that Different Degrees of Explicitness in churches Covenanting, provided the Essence of Faith be included, shall be no Hindrance in our Communion."[18] A few churches, however, went even further. North Stamford, organized in 1781, immediately made known its intention to judge the purity of all other churches,[19] and the pastor of the Winchester First church apparently operated on the principle that all other churches were impure; he demanded that all new-comers to Winchester relate the details of their conversion to him, no matter what church they had been in communion with before their move.[20] The Middletown Second church, even though it had been properly and lawfully established by the General Assembly, rejected membership in the Standing Order and styled itself "the 2nd. Strict Congregational Church and Society in this Town."[21] Perhaps the only thing that saved the Standing Order from complete fragmentation was the fact that the pure church practice was becoming universal in Connecticut.

[18]Montville, Records, III, 13.

[19]North Stamford, Records, I, 2.

[20]Winchester First, Records, II, 16.

[21]Middletown Second, Records, pp. "A" to "C", 16.

Finally, the attempt to create a pure church in fact as well as in name, is demonstrated by what can only be described as an all-out assault on the Half-Way Covenant in the latter part of the eighteenth century. There had never been complete satisfaction with the Half-Way Covenant; even Stoddard opposed it. The practice, however, was ubiquitous in Connecticut before the Awakening. After 1740, both the theory and the practice of the Half-Way Covenant was rejected in church after church because of its incompatibility with a pure church ideal. Abrogation of the Half-Way Covenant was a courageous act for any church because it usually led to confusion and opposition. The best example of this comes from the records of the East Windsor First church. In a church meeting in 1788, the question was asked: "Is there more than one Covenant between God & man[?]" Like most such questions, it seems to have been prepared in advance, and was basically rhetorical. The answer, of course, was that there was only one covenant, "which is the Covenant of Grace, and in this Church those who join in full communion & those who own the Covenant make the same verbal or written profession." Those who wished to join in full communion were required, from about 1755, to give in addition "a relation of their Christian experience." The Half-Wayers simply "owned" the covenant; they gave no relation of experience. Now, in 1788, the Half-Way members were in an odd situation. The church had voted that anyone

who owned the covenant was professing regeneration, but none of the Half-Way members had ever given any evidence of conversion. Probably many of them never realized that they were professing saving grace when they owned the baptismal covenant. The church in February, 1789 informed the Half-Way members that they were no longer entitled "to all the external privileges of the Covenant," and were no longer to vote in church meetings.[22] Nothing was said, however, about whether the church would allow children of the Half-Way members to be baptized. Probably these children were baptized, in which case East Windsor had merely rejected the Half-Way Covenant in theory, or for the future. The First church at Preston voted on November 17, 1781 "to admit no persons, according to the half way practice," but "to baptize the children of persons already in such Standing."[23] There was no doubt a hope that time would wipe out all vestiges of the Half-Way Covenant, and that in the meantime it was best to compromise, rather than actually expel persons who had been in the church for years.

Capitalize Covenant

What further confuses the issue of the Half-Way Covenant, was the presence of so many scrupulous non-communicants in Connecticut. These people were now understood to

[22]East Windsor First (Windsor Second), Records, 10, 13-15.

[23]Preston First, Records, I, 55.

have professed real sainthood, but at the same time they refused to partake of the sacrament of Communion because they feared they were not worthy. Many churches allowed these scrupulous non-communicants to bring their children to be baptized. The Stratford First church wrote a covenant that went into detail about this problem, and the "Stratford Plan" was widely known and sometimes adopted by other churches. Stratford emphasized that the church covenant was a covenant of grace and could not be professed except by those in a state of grace. Therefore, anyone attached to the church was to be regarded "as [a] Visible Christian." But if anyone avoided the Lord's Supper, the church would take special pains to remove his scruples. In the meantime, the children of these people would be baptized, only because "it should be hard & uncharitable to deny them."[24]

It may seem that the churches at East Windsor and Stratford were being hypocritical; both had rejected the Half-Way Covenant, but in both churches, the children of non-communicants were being baptized. What is significant, however, is that the theory of the Half-Way Covenant was attacked. Originally, the Half-Way Covenant had been introduced into New England to protect the Lord's Supper, and the Half-Way status belonged exclusively to the unregenerate. It was hoped that these Half-Way members might someday

[24]Stratford First, Records, 3, 5-6.

experience a conversion, but for the moment they were "natural men," "dead in sin," "dead dogs," "enemies to God," and all of the other unlovely epithets used by the Puritans to describe the unregenerate. Despite the fact that they were only Half-Way members, they were in the church. In a pure church scheme, the situation was intolerable, and it was ended. In those churches above, the non-communicants were understood to be regenerate; there was no place in those churches for an unregenerate person. So, while it may seem that the Half-Way practice continued, there was a significant change in theory, and that change was designed to keep the church pure.

There was, moreover, a natural desire to simplify the ecclesiastical system and many pure churches took a hard line with the scrupulous. Woodstock First church declared in 1760 that "the Covenant of Grace is but one Covenant," and that "the Lord's Supper is not more holy than Baptizm." This phrase often appears in pure church records, and meant that the purity of the baptismal fount was to be as closely guarded as the purity of the Table.[25] At Bloomfield, the pastor was careful to prevent the admission of anyone he felt would hold back from the Lord's Supper.[26] The Sharon church threatened to excommunicate those baptized persons

[25]Woodstock First, Records, III, 37.

[26]Bloomfield, Records, II, 61.

who refused to make "a credible profession" and enter full communion.[27] The First church of East Windsor finally adopted a tougher line with the scrupulous in 1809 when it voted that "it is the duty of all persons standing in covenant relation with the visible Church of Christ to attend & observe the ordinances which he has appointed for his Church. . . ."[28]

The abrogation of the Half-Way covenant, and a sterner attitude toward the scrupulous, are evidences of a wide-spread desire for quality rather than quantity in church life. Very few ministers in Connecticut just prior to the Second Great Awakening seem to have had a desire to "fill up the benches."[29] On the contrary, most ministers seem to have been intent upon driving people away from the church. The predominant desire was for purity rather than numbers.

In conclusion, from 1740 to 1800 the pure church ideal gained new life in Connecticut and the requirements for admission to the Lord's Supper became more strict. All this was well on the way to completion before the Second

[27]Sharon, Records, I, p. 95.

[28]East Windsor (Windsor Second), Records, p. 21.

[29]This is Boorstin's explanation of the adoption of the Half-Way Covenant. The Americans, The Colonial Experience (New York, 1958), p. 25.

Great Awakening at the very end of the century. That Awakening was closely associated with the New Divinity and, in Connecticut, the Awakening owed much to Joseph Bellamy, who although dead before its advent, had trained many of the leading revivalists in Connecticut.[30] But if the Second Great Awakening cemented the victory of the pure church, it be no means caused that victory. It was the influence of Edwards, Whitefield, Tennent, and the other revivalists of the First Awakening, the example of the Strict Congregationalists, and the disruption of the Standing Order that explains the triumph of the pure church in Connecticut.

The results of that triumph were many and complex. A few only can be sketched here. Most immediately, the religious scene in Connecticut was affected by the practice of a pure church. The way was made ready for disestablishment. The pure church created a predisposition in the minds of the clergy for a voluntary church. That the pure church and a voluntary church are not necessarily synonymous terms is obvious enough when we consider that from the New England fathers, through Edwards, and down to Beecher, the pure church was associated with an established church. Neverthe-

[30]Keller, pp. 33-34. Keller does not make the point, but he gives sufficient data to conclude that Litchfield County, Bellamy's area of operations, was foremost in nearly every phase of the revival. Bellamy's importance lay in his role as a transmitter of Edwardian ideas.

less, the trend toward voluntary support of the ministry, encouraged by the Strict Congregationalists; the growing feeling that union among the churches should be a union based upon membership in the mystical church of the true saints rather than an artificial union created by geography and fostered by the state; the prospect of an imminent millennium; the realization that the state was an institution inextricably bound up with the "world"; all these factors encouraged an inclination toward a final separation of church and state among the clergy of the Standing Order.[31] The staunchest defender of the establishment, Lyman Beecher, had a bad few days in 1818, but what is really significant is the ease with which Beecher accepted disestablishment. He very soon realized, he said, that it was "the best thing that ever happened to the State of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God."[32] Separation meant for Beecher the liberation of the church.

The pure church influence upon the Second Great Awakening is most interesting. New England in general, and

[31] Keller, p. 57. Keller points out that the established clergy were amazingly uninterested in the whole question of disestablishment. See also Perry Miller, Life of the Mind in America (New York, 1965), pp. 36-43.

[32] The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, edited by Barbara Cross (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), I, 252-253. Emphasis retained.

Connecticut in particular, supplied most of the fuel that kept the revivals burning for the next half-century. Such organizations as the Connecticut Bible Society, the Connecticut Religious Tract Society, the Domestic Missionary Society of Connecticut, the Litchfield County Foreign Mission Society, and such periodicals as the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, the Religious Intelligencer, and the Connecticut Observer carried the religious ideology of the Land of Steady Habits to the whole nation. Nor should we ignore the role of the non-intellectual Yankee who in his migration West carried with him his religious fervor.

While there was undoubtedly a causal connection between the pure church and the Second Great Awakening in Connecticut, and elsewhere, this is trivial in comparison to the pure church nature of the revival. It was in the Second Awakening that the pure church ideal was transmuted into the ideal of a pure nation. As Perry Miller points out, while the appeal was to the individual, the major concern of the revival was with the community. He quotes one of the revivalists: "Yes! American Christians, in the nature of the case and from the analogies of the past, it is safe to conclude that we must be a great people, but not necessarily or universally a holy people. . ." It was only the grace of God "that can save us from the fate of former republics, and make us a blessing to all nations."[33] The

[33]Miller, Life of the Mind, pp. 3-14.

revival encouraged that plethora of reform activity that marked the American scene from 1800 to 1860. These movements, very much based upon the idea that a perfect society could be constructed, took on many of the characteristics of the religious movement which gave them birth. Miller makes the point that the call for revival went out to those already converted, that the revival was speaking to itself. The whole mechanics of progress was founded upon pure church and millennial ideas. Human improvement was seen as the result of a completely extraneous force, the grace of God, and this divine favor could be won for a land only by the regenerate, and only by them if they remained pure. Therefore, it made eminent sense to exhort the saints time and again. But we see the same thing in the reform movements. For example, Garrison's attempt to end slavery by having non-slaveowners repeatedly witness against the peculiar institution makes no sense unless we take into account the pure church influence. "I appeal to those," he explained, "who have been redeemed from the bondage of sin by the precious blood of Christ, and with whom I hope to unite in a better world in ascribing glory, and honor, and praise to the Great Deliverer for ever. If I can suceed in gaining their attention, I feel sure of convincing their understandings and securing their support."[34] His pronouncement

[34]John L. Thomas, The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1963), p. 150. For Garrison's "Come-Outerism" see pp. 318-323.

that "Duty is ours and events are God's" is a perfect expression of the millennial solution to a great social problem.

The pure church influence is also apparent in New England secessionist thought, especially if we compare that thought with the South's. The Southern disunionist tradition was based upon Constitutional and sectional considerations, while the New England separatist mood was always highly moralistic and anarchistic. There is no essential difference between Thoreau's self-righteous retreat to Walden Pond and the action of a Strict Congregationalist in walking out of an unregenerate church. Timothy Pickering even used the favorite text of the Strict Congregationalists when he urged all right-thinking men to defy the corruption of Jeffersonian America--"Come out from among them, and be ye Separate!"

Finally, perhaps the most interesting result of the pure church victory was its reinvigoration of that peculiar sense of the American mission, to be as a people called out from among the nations that we might serve as an exemplar of how man should live. From Winthrop's city upon the hill to Herbert Hoover's declaration that the United States was the last moral reserve of the world, that ideal had changed very little, either in expression or in the content of the example we were supposed to teach. Today, perhaps, it requires a confidence bordering upon fanaticism to assert the

American mission in positive terms, but we yet feel it, I believe, as we have always felt it most keenly--in our failure to achieve what America should be. In the first year of the eighteenth century, the Reverend Jonathan Belcher looked about the American scene and found everything so rotten that he cried out in heart-break: "We are become like the rest of Nations." To become like the rest of nations. Perhaps in that fear lies all the promise of America, and all the menace.

CONCLUSION

The Puritans who settled New England attempted to realize an ideal with long roots in the Christian past. They tried to create a pure church system, in which only regenerate persons would be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, the Puritans expected to retain many of the features of an established church. The combination of a pure and an established church was basically unstable and began to break down even before the end of the seventeenth century.

In Connecticut, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the pure church remained an ideal, but the actual practice of admissions to Communion had become much less restrictive. Solomon Stoddard finally attacked the ideal itself in his attempt to create in New England a "national" church of which every Christian, regenerate or not, would be a member. Stoddard's out-right rejection of the pure church ideal was not so widely accepted in Connecticut as has been believed; Stoddardism encouraged a tendency toward less restrictive admission in practice, a tendency which even the Mathers, who believed in the pure church theory, encouraged.

The Great Awakening began a reaction in favor of the pure church. The great evangelists, Whitefield, Edwards, Bellamy, Tennent and Davenport were mainly concerned with

shattering the security of saints and sinners. They were far more concerned with purifying the New England churches than they were at enlarging the churches. Edwards finally attempted to reinstitute the pure church practice at Northampton in 1748. Although he failed and was dismissed from his pulpit, Edwards became the intellectual leader of the pure church. In Connecticut his most influential disciple was Joseph Bellamy, one of the founders of the "New Divinity."

The collapse of the Revival led to the organization of schismatical Strict Congregational churches. Despite persecution these churches perservered in their efforts to put the pure church ideal into practice. They gained adherents; they worked out an inter-church union; they coped successfully with the problems caused by their more enthusiastic members. Finally, by 1777, the Strict Congregationalists won complete victory in their struggle against the parish rate.

Within the Standing Order the abrupt ending of the Awakening added bitterness to a controversy over itinerant preaching. Those who opposed itinerancy were in control of the civil and ecclesiastical machinery of Connecticut during the period of the Great Awakening, but with the advent of a new generation of ministers, the anti-itinerants lost power to those who held pure church ideals, and who were finally beginning to put those ideals into practice. By the close

of the eighteenth century the churches of the Standing Order were nearly unanimous in demanding proof of regeneration before admitting persons to the Lord's Supper. Since this was so, many of the Strict Congregational churches merged with the regular churches.

The triumph of the pure church helped bring about the disestablishment of the Congregational churches in 1818 by creating a predisposition among the regular clergy toward a voluntary church of real saints, over which the unregenerate world would have no control. The pure church victory also revived the Puritan concept of the errand into the wilderness, from which errand we Americans may not yet have returned.

Appendix I

STODDARDEAN CHURCHES[1]

[1] By Stoddardean I mean:

a) Those churches where the unregenerate were allowed or ordered to come to the Lord's Supper.
b) Those churches where there is some record of the admission procedure, and where regeneration is not clearly demanded.
c) Those churches in which the pastor examined candidates privately or where the pastor had all control over admissions, unless he was expressly instructed to inquire into the state of grace of applicants.
d) Those churches which adopted a Stoddardean polity, even if there is no record of their mode of admission to the Lord's Supper.

Note: In Appendix I and II, the date of a church's establishment is either the date of legal incorporation as an ecclesiastical society, or the date of ordination of the first minister. Unless otherwise noted, the sources of the following information are the manuscript church records at the Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

I. Ashford (Westford), est. 1768

This church allowed the minister to examine candidates privately, without instructing him to look for grace. (Records, I, p. 45)

II. Bozrah (Norwich Fifth), est. 1739

The covenant of this church does not demand regeneration. "Tis the Principle ? of this Church, that those Persons who have previously owned the Covenant and have had their Children Baptized, are members of this Church and are not only under the watch and Discipline of it, But have a right to all Spiritual Ordinances and are under Covenant Obligations to attend them. . . ." Bozrah also regarded the practice of a public profession with "indifferency." (Records, III, pp. 42, 60) (Mss. at Conn. Hist. Soc.)

III. Bridgeport (Stratfield), est. 1695

In 1750 this church voted "that the Examination of persons duly Qualify'd be refer'd to our Pastor." If by "duly Qualify'd" the church meant regeneration is not clear, but after 1753 the pastor here was Robert Ross, who believed in an unregenerate communion.
(Records, I, p. 53)

IV. Canaan First, est. 1740

This church voted in 1752 that "none Should be admitted to Enter into Covenant with this Church but Such as Proposs'd to Come to the Lord's Table." This ended the Half-Way Covenant in Canaan First church, but whether their objection to the Half-Way practice was based upon Edwardian or Stoddardean reasons is unclear. This church did allow the minister to examine candidates privately, and made no specific requirement that he look for grace. (Records, I, pp. 24, 26)

V. Cheshire (New Cheshire), est. 1723

In 1767 it was voted to continue the traditional practice at this church of allowing the minister to examine applicants privately. In 1778 a member of the church separated because the church was not composed of "real Saints & none but Such." While it would be dangerous to accept Separatist accusations at face value, it is significant that the church did

not reject his charge, but rather expelled the Separatist in 1780.
(Records, III, Misc. Papers, pp. 1a, 11, 22a)

VI. Colchester First, est. 1703

The early records of this church are missing, but in a revision of the constitution in 1792 it was stated that "such Persons as have arrived to years of Discretion, and have acquired a competent degree of knowledge, and sustain a good moral character, and have received the Seal of Baptism, are satisfied in their own minds that it is their duty to join the Church, and partake of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, may be admitted." This provision was "agreeable to the universal practice of this Church from on, or about the year 1702. . . ."

It may further be noted that this church averaged over twenty admissions each year between 1733 and 1738, and that this very rapid growth was not attributed to revivals.
(Records, I, pp. 4-5; II, pp. 1-2)

VII. Cromwell First (Middletown Second), est. 1715

This church in its first covenant made a public profession optional, but unnecessary in admissions to full communion. The covenant of 1738 for full communion was little more than an affirmation of belief in the Nicene Creed. This church then demanded an "historical" faith, rather than regeneration in its admissions.
(Records, I, pp. 1, 9)

VIII. Danbury First, est. 1696

The covenant is silent about the need for grace and of sufficient length to make that silence significant. It was further voted in 1770 that Half-Way members could come to the Lord's Supper whenever they felt ready, without the necessity of getting the church's consent.
(Records, V, pp. 1, 3)

IX. East Guilford, est.

There are no records, but the pastor here from 1733 to 1790 was Jonathan Todd, one of the active adherents of James Dana in the Wallingford controversy. Todd denied the necessity of a regenerate ministry.

X. Enfield, est. 1683

The original Confession of Faith, written when Solomon Stoddard was active a few miles up-river in propagating the unregenerate communion, ends with the hope that God "would give efficacy to the means used for the edification of saints, and for the instruction and conversion of sinners. . . ." Enfield was, of course, the site of Edwards' famous sermon, and his biographers sometimes refer to the "dead" condition of Enfield in the pre-Awakening times, and attribute this to the Stoddardean influence.
(Records, II, p. 7; Means, Strict Cong. Ch. of Enfield)

XI. Fairfield (Greenfield Hill), est. 1725

In 1759 the practice of allowing Half-Way members into full communion was certainly being practiced, and may have been practiced earlier. From 1770 to 1784 over one hundred persons "renewed" their baptismal covenant and were admitted to full membership, while a separate list of forty-one persons for the same period entered directly into full communion, probably by profession. In 1805, this church admitted any Episcopalian in good standing in his own church to communion.
(Records, I, pp. 11, 37-41; II, p. 104)

XII. Franklin (Norwich Second), est. 1718

The records of this church are very difficult to interpret. The Confession of Faith of 1782 clearly states that the covenant being professed by applicants is the covenant of grace, but the pastor in 1842 writes that "it has never been fashionable in this place, publicly to profess religion. . . ." Perhaps the minister examined applicants privately.
(Records, I, pp. 14-15; Misc. Documents, #13, p. "P")

XIII. Glastonbury (Buckingham), est. 1731

In 1788 Half-Way members were given the right to come to the Lord's Supper whenever they felt ready. There is no evidence that such persons were expected to be regenerate.
(Records, II, p. 109)

FOUR STAR BOND

XIV. Hampton First, est. 1717

It is impossible to say anything about this church's communion policy before 1800, but it adopted a Stoddardean polity in 1725 when it was voted that any church had authority over the inhabitants of a parish, whether or not the inhabitants were in full communion. (Records, I, pp. 4-5)

XV. Middletown First, est. 1668

In 1777, public relations were made optional but not necessary for admission. (Records, II, p. 66)

XVI. New Haven First, est.

This church dropped the necessity of a profession in 1751. Furthermore, the pastor here from 1716 to 1761 was Joseph Noyes, denounced by Davenport as unconverted, and an active adherent to the Dana faction. (Records, I, p. 26)

XVII. New London First, est. 1670

In 1726 the necessity for a public profession was dropped. The church may yet have expected regeneration but the evidence is sufficiently doubtful on this point to list this church as Stoddardian. (Records, I, pp. 13-14, 27)

XVIII. New Milford, est.

In 1769 it was voted that Half-Way members had a right to the Lord's Supper. This vote was reaffirmed in 1773. In neither case does it appear that Half-Wayers were expected to be regenerate in the judgement of the church. This church was also troubled by Separatists who claimed that the admissions policy was too lax. (Records, pp. 12-15)

XIX. Norwich First, est. 1660

In 1745 this church dropped their former practice of requiring a relation of experience for admission. The church specifically denied that a relation of experience was Scriptural. In the 1750's, some

members of this church separated on the grounds that the unregenerate were admitted to the Lord's Supper.
(Records, II, pp. 18, 44-45, 67; I, p. 47)

XX. Redding, est. 1733

This church allowed the Half-Way members to come to the communion whenever they felt ready, without gaining the consent of the church.
(Records, I, p. 3)

XXI. Stamford First, est.

In 1747 this church voted "That it is not expedient. . .to take a vote of the Chh. upon the admission of a Member to communion."
(Records, III, p. 202)

XXII. Sprague (Hanover), est. 1761

In 1768 this church voted that they would prefer a relation of "the hope" which applicants for the Lord's Supper had "within them," but at the same time, it was voted that "this Church will admit members. . .their lives & conversation being externally agreeable to the gospel."
(Records, I, pp. 10, 18)

XXIII. Windham First, est. 1700

In 1709 this church voted to drop the requirement of a public profession "from those who from their own weakness or in point of Judgment do object against it." In 1712 the right of the congregation to object to a candidate for admission was practically eliminated. In 1720 the church adopted a Stoddardean polity when it voted that all baptized persons residing within the parish were subject to the discipline of the church.

In addition, this pulpit was held by Thomas Clap from 1726 to 1740, in which space of time he admitted over two hundred persons to full communion. Had he demanded regeneration in his admissions, Clap would have been known as the greatest revivalist of the century; in fact, his reputation is that of a moderate "Old Light."
(Records, I, pp. 3, 6-8)

Appendix II

PURE CHURCHES[1]

[1] By pure church I mean:

a) A church where a profession of experience was clearly required for admission.
b) A church where the covenant to be professed was clearly considered a covenant of grace, and where those being admitted were therefore understood as professing regeneration.

I. Abington (Pomfret Second), est. c.1753

The covenant of this church was typically pure church. The Abington covenant in fact was a verbatim copy of other earlier covenants. The covenant opens: "We the Subscribers. . .being hopefully persuaded, Each for himself and Charitably for each other that we have been made willing in the Day of God's power. . . ."

They will admit "all such persons as are Orthodox in Faith free from Scandal and able to Examine themselves & Discern the Lords Body as also to rest satisfied with Such admittance of Adult Persons into this Chh. as is performed Either by making a confession of Faith, or Relation of the Work of Grace on their Hearts, or producing testimonies of their Reputed piety, or who do Charatably discover the same by Religious & Exemplary Conversations."
(Records, III, pp. 3-5)

II. Barkhamsted First, est. 1781

The covenant of 1781, which candidates for admission were required to profess, is obviously a covenant of grace. "You do in humble Confidence of his Gracious Assistance. . ." promise to attend all Gospel duties. In the Confession of Faith, article four, the church stated its belief that "Mankind. . .are Dead in Sin, and so Contrary to God, and averse to a Reconciliation that without the Special Influences of divine Grace, they never will. . .Comply with the Call of the Gospel. . . ."
(Records, I, pp. 1, 6)

III. Bethlehem (Bethlem), est. 1739

This was Joseph Bellamy's church. Before 1750 Bellamy practiced the Half-Way Covenant, and perhaps also an unregenerate communion, but in 1750 Bellamy recorded that "upon Publishing Mr. Edwards Book on the Sacrament", he was convinced that the Half-Way Covenant was unscriptural, "there Being no other Scriptural owning of the Covenant but what implies a profession of Godliness. . . ."
(Records, I, p. 10)

IV. Bloomfield, est. 1738

In October, 1785 this church adopted a covenant which called for a profession of grace. This church is discussed at some length in the text above, Chapter VII, pp.
(Records, II, pp. 33-63)

V. Branford First, est. 1688

The original covenant required a "visible profession of religion", and the church as late as 1794 reaffirmed its definition of a profession "as implying real religion, &. . .real religion implies grace in the heart."
(Records, I, 3; II, p. 14)

VI. Bristol First, est. 1744

In 1792 the Confession of Faith of this church included the provision that "none have a real right in the sight of God to sit down at his table. . .but such as are real friends in heart to Christ, and that none have a visible right . . .in the sight of men, but such as are visibly friendly in heart to him."
(Records, II, pp. 32-33)

VII. Brooklyn First, est. 1734

See the Abington covenant above, #1.

(Records, I, pp. 2-4--Conn. Hist. Soc.)

VIII. Colchester Second, est. 1729

The original covenant includes the usual pure church phrases: "We do Confess with out Mouths, and believe with our hearts;" furthermore, the Covenant is clearly identified as the covenant of grace. This covenant was written soon after the argument between Mather and Stoddard on the nature of the sacrament, and Colchester Second took the Matherian position that the Lord's Supper was not a converting ordinance, but a "means for the application of the benefits of redemption."
(Records, I, pp. 1-2)

IX. Columbia (Lebanon Crank), est. 1722

This church specifically rejected the Stoddardean communion when it voted in 1722 that "if person sic be in an unconverted Estate and are con vinced of it unto th em Selves that they are not to be Admitted unto church fellowship." The second article of the covenant made a public relation unnecessary in some cases, where the applicant was timid, but each applicant for full membership had to make a confession of faith, which the church described as a confession of "Experience and not Doctrine. . . ." This meant that a person might enter by telling the church he had had a conversion experience, but he need not relate in detail the experience. Needless to say, the church would judge for itself whether the admission should be granted.
(Records, I, pp. 1-2)

X. Cornwall First, est.

This church was pure in 1870 when its constitution declared that "all persons may become members of this church who give credible evidence of piety . . . ." This church allowed persons to withdraw from the membership if they found their conversion had been false.
(Records, II, p. 80)

XI. Coventry First, est. 1714

In the 1790's the members of this church were habitually referred to as "Professors of Religion."
(Records, I, p. 5; II, p. 26)

XII. Coventry First, est. 1745

As above, members are referred to in the 1790's as "Professors of Religion." In addition, the Articles of Faith of 1819 contain the clause that "real holiness is a necessary qualification for Christian Communion."
(Records, V, pp. 29, 43)

XIII. East Haddam First, est. 1702

The original Confession of Faith is decidedly pure church. It begins: "We believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths", and goes on to define a congregational church as a "company of visible

believers." The list of admissions is entitled: "An account of those added to this Church. . .by virtue of the Testimony they have given of the Grace of God in them. . . ." The congregation was to decide "whether Such relation be in any ways evidential of grace. . . ." The covenant was renewed in 1751 without alteration in the mode of admission, and in 1772 the church was still clearly requiring conversion before admission.
(Records, I, 1-2, 4, 37-39, 112-114)

XIV. East Haddam Second (Millington), est. 1736

The covenant begins with the same phrase as the covenant of the First church above, but in the Second church the applicant for admission had to profess to "be really & practically Conformed" to the Word of God "in Knowledge, faith, Holiness, repentence & new obedience. . . ." The "new obedience" especially indicates conversion. In 1767 the church renewed its covenant and made the admission procedure more explicit. Only those were to be admitted, who, inter alia, gave evidence "of real piety such as have experienced . . .saving grace. . .tho' the weakest degree of real faith is to be accepted." Those who demurred at a public relation could be examined privately by the pastor, but the pastor was to look for conversion.
(Records, I, p. 2; II, pp. "B-E", 5)

XV. East Hampton (Middle Haddam), est. 1740

The original covenant is very much the same as the two above. A renewed covenant of 1762 emphasized the solemnity of the profession the applicant was about to make.
(Records, I, p. 1; II, p. "B")

XVI. East Haven First, est. 1711

The Confession of 1755 is typically pure church. It begins: "You do now in the awful presence of the dread majesty of heaven and earth. . .with seriousness, and as you hope, in sincerity of soul avouch the Lord Jehovah" to be your God. The congregation admitted applicants by majority vote, so that they probably required a public relation.
(Records, III, pp. 2-3)

XVII. East Windsor First (Windsor Second), est. 1695

This church was probably Stoddardean before 1755. The pastor at East Windsor was Timothy Edwards, Stoddard's son-in-law, and Jonathan Edwards' father. Since Jonathan practiced the open communion in the early phase of his career, I assume he was not practicing anything very different from his father, with whom Edwards was very close. The controversy in Northampton must have had some effect upon Timothy Edwards. In 1755, while he was still pastor, it was voted that "a relation of. . .Christian experience" was necessary for admission to the Lord's Supper. But since the Half-Way covenant was still practiced, this church had to yet resolve the question "Is there more than one Covenant between God & man. . .?" In 1789 it was voted that there was only one covenant, the covenant of grace, and the Half-Way members were disenfranchised.
(Records, pp. 10, 14-15)

XVIII. Farmington First, est. 1652

There is no record of the original covenant, but admissions in the 1670's required "a brief narrative. . .of experience," upon which the church voted to accept or reject. In 1730 the church adopted a covenant in which they quoted Thomas Hooker: "The seals do not give the first grace, but presuppose those that receive them to have grace. . . ."
(Records, II, pp. 72, 150)

XIX. Glastonbury First, est. 1731

The Confession of c. 1821 is probably pure church since there is such great stress placed upon grace and regeneration.
(Records, IV, p. 3)

XX. Goshen First, est. 1791

The original covenant is clearly pure church. They "agree that a gospel church consists of a number of professed friends to Jesus Christ. . ." and that "those who profess the religion of Christ" should give "evidence. . .that they are friends to Jesus Christ." This evidence was to be regulated by a judgment of Christian charity, another typical pure church phrase.
(Records, I, pp. 1-2)

XXI. Greenwich First, est. 1670

This church was reorganized in 1810, and the covenant at that time restricted the Lord's Supper "to those only. . .who are visible Christians." They affirmed that "a renewal of heart. . .is necessary. . .to a life of holiness."
(Records, IV, pp. "B-I")

XXII. Guilford First, est. c. 1729

A history of this church written by the pastor in 1769 claims that this church "like New Haven in admitting new members into the church. . .required a relation of. . .experience. . . ." As late as 1875 Guilford First church still practiced "admission by profession."
(Records, VI, pp. 6-7, 15; VII, Misc. Documents: Manual of the First Congregational Church, Guilford. . .1875, p. 14)

XXIII. Hamden (Whitneyville), est. 1795

The original covenant is typically pure church. It begins: "We do now solemnly and as we hope with Sincerity of Soul agree and Covenant. . . ."
(Records, I, p. 5)

XXIV. Hampton First, est. 1723

In 1723 this church covenanted as "Gods chosen people, and a particular chh.", a direct rebuke to Stoddard's idea of the covenant. In 1800 the covenant is obviously pure church.
(Records, I, pp. 3, 6, Supplement #1, pp. 177)

XXV. Hartford First, est. 1633

During the Awakening, this church was probably Stoddardean; at the least its admissions policy was not very strict under Rev. Daniel Wadsworth. In the period 1774 to 1816 the Half-Way covenant was dropped, but whether from pure church motives is not clear. In 1818 the Covenant is pure church, applicants professing to "seriously, deliberately, and forever give up yourselves in faith and love and holy obedience. . . ."
(Historical Catalogue of the First Church in Hartford, 1633-1885, (Published by the Church, 1885), pp. xiv-xv, xviii)

XXVI. Hartford Second (South), est. 1669

This was a splinter group from the First church protesting among other things the lax admission policy of the parent church. The original covenant of the Second church specified that "visible Saints are the only fitt matter. . .of a visible Church." This covenant was renewed in 1767 and the admission requirements of the original retained.
(Records, I, pp. 2, 4)

XXVII. Lebanon (Goshen), est. 1729

The original covenant is described as a "Covenant of Grace" with "internal & external privileges." This phase often appears in pure church covenants, and means that the church using it rejects the idea of a visible church distinct from the invisible church. There is only one church, with internal privileges--salvation, and external privileges--the sacraments. The Lebanon covenant also expressed its intention to keep the sacraments "pure."
(Records, II, p. 2)

XXVIII. Lyme (Hadlyme), est. 1742

The covenant of 1745 is typically pure church. It is stated there that "none should be admitted members in order to communion. . .but such persons as are Knowing and Sound in the Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion without Scandal in their lives--and to a judgment--regulated by the word of God--are persons of Visible Holiness, and Honesty, credibly practissing Cordial Subjection to Jesus Christ." This church realized the problem of any established pure church; should they remain in communion with other churches in the Standing Order where admissions were not strict? The Lyme church, like most, hedged on the problem, they declared that "Different degrees of explicitness in professing grace should no ways hinder such Churches from owning Each other as Instituted Churches."
(Records, III, pp. 4-5; IV, p. 5)

XXIX. Killingly (South), est. 1746

The original covenant is the same as that of Abington, above, #1.
(Records, p. 1-2)

XXX. Litchfield (Milton), est. 1795

In 1800 a committee was set up to assist the pastor in admitting new members. The pastor and committee were to "converse with & Examine Candidates. . . ." Probably the examination was concerned with grace, and the conversation with the applicant's experience.
(Records, II, p. 3)

XXXI. Mansfield First, est. 1710

This covenant is the same as that of Abington, above, #1. The Mansfield church adopted this covenant earlier than any other church so far as I am aware, and may have adopted it as early as 1710. In that case it was written as a direct rebuke to Stoddard.

In 1726 this church dropped the necessity of a public relation, and in 1744 Separatists in this parish were claiming that the church admitted the unregenerate. The church denied that it admitted those "destitute of every thing that belongs to the Carracter of a visible Saint." Apparently, the pastor or the church realized that visible sainthood required only a seemingly moral life, so the word "visible" was crossed out, and the word "real" was substituted. Thus, this church looked for evidence that its communicants were "real Saints", which of course, was regeneration.
(Records, II, 43-44, 51-53; volume "A", pp. 56, 58, 89)

XXXII. Marlborough, est. 1749

In 1798, when the church was temporarily lacking a pastor, it was voted "that if any person has a desire to join to this church, he or she may converse with the then-supplying Candidate, & if he is satisfied with their religious knowledge & experience, he may propound them for communion...."
(Records, I, pp. 25-26)

XXXIII. Middlebury, est. 1796

The original covenant requires that "persons should credibly profess they believe and embrace" the Covenant.
(Records, Misc. Papers, unbound, no pagination. The original covenant is reproduced in Pamphlet #9 as it was renewed in 1836.)

XXXIV. Middlefield, est. c.1744

While the records up to 1808 are lost, the Confession of Faith of that year restricted the Lord's Supper to "visible Christians only." Article nine of the same Confession declared that "grace, or suitable affections of heart to God . . .are a requisite qualification for communion . . . ." The phraseology is distinctly Edwardian, and may have been adopted at an earlier time than 1808.

This church specifically required both subjective and objective assurance before admission. (Records, I, p. 1)

XXXV. Middletown Second (South), est. 1788

This church called itself the "2nd Strict Congregational Church and Society in this Town," even though its members had been regularly dismissed from the Middletown First Church, and the parish had been legally incorporated by the General Assembly. The original members began the church by "a Relation of our gracious experience to each other. . . ."
(Records, pp. "A-C", 16)

XXXVI. Middletown Third, (Westfield), est. 1773

The original Confession of Faith is clearly pure church. Article XIV limited membership in the church to "gracious" persons; article XV required a "relation of the Work of the Sperit. . .upon their Hearts"; AND article XVI gave the members of the church the right to"converse freely" with the applicant about his experience.
(Records, I, p. 4)

XXXVII. Montville (New London North), est. 1722

In 1748 this church rewrote its covenant because "a greater Degree of Expliciteness than in our former Covenant is necessary to the Wellbeing of this Church." The covenant very clearly called for conversion before admission. "With Relation to our Experiences in Religion, We do. . .solemnly, sincerely, & without any known Guile, declare that we Believe the Justice of God in unchangeably requiring that every Tittle of his holy Law be fulfilled, annexing the Penalty of Everlasting Death in case of the least failure therein." "As

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to the Lord's Supper more particularly, as to the Admission of Members. . .this Church should require of all those who desire Admission. . .not only that they be sound in judgement as to Matters of Faith, but seriously profess their acceptance of Christ, & obedience to Him. . . ." The odd thing is that this covenant was sent to Solomon Williams and another neighboring minister for their advice; Williams suggested a few verbal changes, and yet, two years later, Williams would become the defender of the Stoddardean communion against Edwards' attempts to restrict admissions in Northampton. Edwards' rebuttal of Williams concentrated on the point that Williams did not understand the controversy, and that his arguments were logically pure church.
(I might add that the date of the covenant in the records is 1758, but based upon internal evidence, I am satisfied that it could not have been written that late. Probably the minister wrote a "5" instead of a "4".)
(Records, III, pp. 5-14, 16, 123-124)

XXXVIII. New Canaan, est. 1733

This church ended the Half-Way Covenant in 1781 for pure church reasons. In 1772, there occurs the phrase: "Persons desirous of and found qualified for admission to full communion. . . ." Emphasis mine.
(Records, I, 58, 61, 75)

XXXIX. New Hartford, est. 1739

This church adopted the Stratford covenant, which was pure church. See below, #53.
(Records, p. 56)

XL. Norfolk, est. 1760

The pastor here from 1761 to 1813 was Ammi Ruhamah Robbins, son of Philemon Robbins, and a friend of Joseph Bellamy. According to one of his successors at Norfolk, "he never received persons to a public profession of religion, but upon a charitable evidence of personal grace."
(Records, "Biographical Sketch of Rev. Mr. Robbins", p. 89)

XLI. North Branford, est. 1727

The Confession of Faith of 1769, which is a copy of the original, specifically rebuked Stoddard by proclaiming that "Particular Churches are the Institution of Christ. . . ." The Covenant was clearly defined as "this Covenant of Grace." (Records, II, pp. 7-9)

XLII. North Stamford, est. 1781

The original covenant is clearly pure church. Article II enjoined care in admission to communion; article VII described in detail the mode of admission, including public profession, and examination of the candidate by the church members. In regard to communion with the other churches of the Standing Order, the North Stamford church declared that any person coming from another church and asking to be admitted to the Lord's Supper at North Stamford would be admitted upon recommendation of his former church "provided such church, in their admission of members, insist upon their profession of saving faith as a necessary qualification." If no such qualification had been required, the applicant would have to convince the North Stamford church that he was regenerate. (Records,

XLIII. North Stonington, est. 1727

During the Awakening, this church denied Separatist charges that unconverted persons were admitted to the Lord's Supper, and that the church regarded the communion as a converting ordinance. By 1791, the covenant of this church was specifically pure church; those desiring admission had to give a public relation of "the great things which they trusted God had done for them." In 1824 this church united with the Strict Congregational church at North Stonington on a covenant which required "the comfortable hope of a personal condition of grace" for admission. (Records, II, pp. 3-5, 111, 116-117, 124-125; III, pp. 3-8)

XLIV. North Windsor, est. 1760

This church rejected the Half-Way Covenant for pure church reasons by 1776. In that year the pastor recorded that it had been the custom "formerly to admit Persons to own the baptisimal Covt. & have Baptism for their Children, when neither the Covenanters nor the Chh. looked on them as presently meet for. . .attendance on the Lord's Supper, whereas at present we have but one Covt or Profession for all. . . ." (Records, p. 43)

XLV. North Woodstock, est. 1727

This church began its history with a strongly anti-Stoddardean covenant. It warned that "whosoever eats & Drinks unworthily is guilty of the body & blood of the Lord, & therefore everyone is to examine himself lest he eat & Drink Judgement unto himself. . . ." In 1792 the covenant was renewed and rewritten, being a copy of the sort described under Abington, above, #1. (Records, I, pp. 1, 131-134)

XLVI. Norwich Second (Chelsea), est. c.1760

The original Confession of Faith required "faith . . .repentance. . .Sincere & unfeigned holiness in heart. . ." for admission. In the Plan of Discipline of 1761 it was declared that "those only are to be excluded. . .who are Scandalous or ignorant. By ignorant we mean. . .Such as are ignorant of the operations of the Spirit of God on their own hearts. Yet we do no mean to call those ignorant who have many doubts & fears of the genuineness of these operations, for this is often the case of many of Gods people." (Records, I, pp. 7-9, 13, 25, 46)

XLVII. Plainfield First, est.

The covenant of 1751, a copy of the original, is clearly defined as the covenant of grace, and those entering the church had to profess that they had "a Heart to give up our Selves wholly to God. . . ." In accounts of individuals admitted to this church a relation of experience is habitually mentioned. A covenant of 1811 was even more explicitly pure church. This church merged with a Separatist church in 1769. (Records, I, pp. 8-10, 26-30, 44, 47-48, 52-60)

XLVIII. Preston First, est. 1690

The original covenant warns that "confession of the name of Christ is not to be separated from faith in the heart. . . ." In 1784 the covenant was made more explicit, when it was voted that grace was "a term of communion." In 1790 the church members gave themselves the right to converse with applicants about their experience of conversion.
(Records, I, pp. 35, 55, 59, 95, 153)

XLIX. Scotland (Windham Third), est. 1732

Originally a Stoddardean church, at least in polity, this church in 1804 voted that "for the future none should be required to own the Covenant or permitted to do it without having a Right to complete fellowship. . .as Members in full Communion." This ended the Half-Way Covenant, and the tenor of the vote indicates that the church expected more than morality in admissions.
(Records, II, pp. 43-44, 65)

L. Sharon First, est. 1755

The original covenant is defined as the covenant of grace, but this church admitted members without a relation of experience until 1784. In that year, one of the prominent members of the church threatened to separate unless relations were required. In 1790 the church opened examination of applicants to the whole church and this apparently satisfied the person who had complained.
(Records, I, pp. 1, 43, 45, 93, 95)

LI. Somers, est. 1727

This church was Stoddardean at its formation, the original Articles of Faith declaring that "all those who by baptism outwardly profess their faith in X Christ make up the visible church of X on earth. . . ." In 1769 a change had taken place, and when a new pastor was ordained in that year he was examined as to "the Gratious opperations of God's Spirit on his Heart. . . ." In 1773 this church merged with the Strict Congregationalists in Somers on a covenant that "faith in Christ is Necessary in order to Duly Qualify persons for. . . Communion & that the weakest Degrees of Saving faith is to be accepted provided they are persons

of visible holiness. . . ." Public relations of experience were "strongly recommended." A Plan of Discipline, adopted the next year, is even more explicit. Article I stated that "none are to be admitted. . .except those. . .experimentally acquainted with Christ. . . ."
(Records, I, p. 14; III, pp. 5, 12-14; IV, p. 10)

LII. Stonington First, est. 1674

The original covenant stated that "the Confession of the Name of Christ is not to be separated from Faith in the Heart." In 1810 a new covenant was adopted in which applicants expressed their belief that "a church of Christ consists of a number of persons publickly and credibly professing to have repentance towards God. . .with suitable evidence of grace in the heart."
(Records, I, pp. 25, 30-31)

LIII. Stratford First, est. 1680

In 1784 this church adopted a covenant widely known, and adopted by other churches in order to handle the problem of the scrupulous non-communicant. That this covenant was the covenant of grace is clearly stated, and the mode of admission was described as follows: "None should be admitted. . .but such as are free from open scandal, appear to be serious, own the Christian Doctrines & to a judgement of charity are resolved by divine grace to maintain a conversation becoming the gospel." In regard to the scrupulous, it was declared that "it would be hard & uncharitable to deny them" the right to have their children baptized. On the other hand, "as there is but one covenant. . . and the Ordinances of Baptism & the Lords Supper are equally sacred", the scrupulous had a duty to attend the Lord's Supper, and were to be special attention in order to remove their scruples.
(Records, pp. 3, 5-6)

LIV. Torrington First, est. 1741

A 1787 copy of the original covenant restricts admission to those who can "engage hearty obedience to" God. This church also warned that "A careful & Strict discipline is to be exercised . . .by every particular Chh. over its members being very cautious in admitting members. . . ."

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This church later merged with a Strict Congregational church.
(Records, II, pp. 4-7, 11)

LV. Vernon First, est. 1762

The Confession of Faith of 1838 required "vital piety" for admission.
(Records, p. 5)

LVI. Warren, est. 1750

The Confession of Faith of 1772 so emphasized the necessity of regeneration that there was added the assurance that "the Doctrine of free grace doth not in any Sort, countenance or encourage the Saints to live in the least Degree of Sin."
(Records, Book #2, p. 13)

LVII. Washington (New Preston First), est. 1757

From its beginning to 1800, and later, admissions to this church were "by profession."
(Records, p. 20)

LVIII. Westminster (Canterbury Second), est. 1770

This church was formed by a "Convention of professing Christian brethren. . . ." It was voted that admission would require "a relation of. . . Christian experiences. . . ."
(Records, I, pp. 4, 8, 11, 14)

LIX. Winchester First, est. 1771

In 1779 this church voted "That it is our opinion that a visable apearance of holiness is necessary in order for the church to admit members into their communion." The pastor even refused to accept persons moving into Winchester from other churches unless they gave him "an account of their Spiritual estate. . . ." This church was still obviously pure church in 1851.
(Records, II, pp. 15-23; IV, p. 21)

LX. Winsted First (Winchester or East Barkhamsted), est. 1778

The covenant of 1800 specified "repentance. . .and faith. . .credibly professed" as a qualification for admission.
(Records, II, pp. 5-6)

LXI. Wolcott, est. 1773

In 1777 this church instructed its pastor to "recommend no person to the communion of this Chh. but those whom. . .from a judgment of charity, he deemed to be persons of grace." (Records, I, p. 26)

LXII. Woodbury First, est. 1670

In the first century of this church's history, admission to the Lord's Supper appears to have been easy, and conversion was unnecessary. In 1760, however, a new pastor was ordained, and it was voted by the church that the covenant of this church was a covenant of grace. This raised the problem of those admitted earlier. The church solved this problem by agreeing to consider such persons as full members "upon their manifesting that they mean to be understood as having ownd a Covenant of grace. . . ." In 1814 we find persons being admitted after "having given satisfactory evidence of knowledge & Piety. . . ."
(Records, I, pp. 4-5, 128-129; II, p. 6)

LXIII. Woodstock First, est.

This church dropped the necessity of a personal relation in 1756, but required it again in 1779, when the covenant was clearly defined as the covenant of grace.
(Records, III, pp. 5, 37)

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I have listed the churches below under the name of the towns within which they are today located. I have added the original name of the society in parentheses where there might be some difficulty in identifying a church. The dates given below conflict in a few cases with those given in Bulletin 19 because I have tried in all cases to mark the first year in which records of the church meetings began.

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Guilford First. Records, 1717-1921. 9 vols.

Guilford Second (North). Records, 1720-1859. 6 vols.

Glastonbury First. Records, 1731-1924. 5 vols.

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Goshen First. Records, 1791-1855. 2 vols.

Hamden (Whitneyville or East Plain). Records, 1795-1915. 5 vols.

Hampton First. Records, 1723-1897. 6 vols.

Hartford First. Records, 1684-1930. 29 vols. The church meeting records begin only in 1816.

Hartford Second. Records, 1767-1920. 5 vols.

Hartland First (East). Records, 1731-1896. one volume.

Kent. Records, 1741-1859. 4 vols.

Killingly South (Breakneck Hill). Records, 1746-1755. one volume.

Killingworth. Records, 1735-1893. 4 vols.

Lebanon First. Records, 1700-1883. one volume.

Lebanon (Goshen). Records, 1728-1895. 2 vols.

Lyme (Hadlyme). Records, 1742-1932. 7 vols.

Mansfield First. Records, 1747-1927. 4 vols.

Marlborough. Records, 1749-1951. 5 vols.

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This list has been supplemented by the published records of certain churches, and in a few cases, by local histories. These are listed below, under Secondary Works. The Connecticut Historical Society supplied useful church records for Killingly (Rev. Henry Robinson's Historical Notes on Killingly), and Suffield (Church Records Kept by Rev. Ebenezer Devotion, Second Pastor of the First Church in Suffield). The Society has type-written extracts from most of the church records, but as these extracts are usually of a genealogical character, they were only occasionally useful in this work.

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